# The MINISTER'S QUARTERLY

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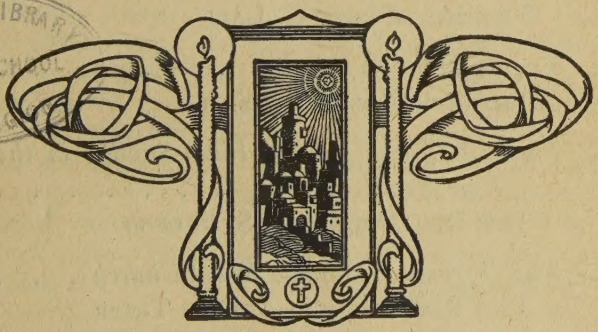

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# Literature and the Education of the Feelings

The Rev. W. J. Thompson
*Alhambra, Calif.*

IT has been said that travel is always well worth doing. Of course the real value of such experience is what it does to the traveler—widening his mental horizon, and enriching his understanding.

And it is worthy of note that one can travel to other times as well as other places by entering imaginatively into history along the entrancing Highway of Literature. . . .

Literature is the one art whose resources exceed those of all other arts—making it possible for the reader who lives through imagination in the situations it depicts, to experience vicariously all the diverse human sentiments which human beings would experience in such happenings. When education is mentioned the idea that most readily presents itself is the belief that education consists in acquiring knowledge of a variety of facts and their relations, and in developing the intellectual powers required for the acquisition, organization, and application of this knowledge. But evidently this constitutes only an intellectual education. For the development of a complete human being there must be added not only moral education but also the education of his feelings. . . . Education of the feelings brings about the development of the capacity to discriminate among feelings—and it constitutes the possession of a cultivated taste. It is important not only to the sensibilities but often even to the happiness of those with whom he comes in contact. This sensitiveness and capacity for fine discrimination alone makes possible the intuitive understanding of another's temperament and gives a sympathetic insight into his scale of values, his motives, his problems, his ideals and aspirations. It is thus the indispensable foundation for tactful dealing with others and for accurate appreciation of the endless variety of human relationships and human situations. Truly, a man is not fully human if he is undeveloped in the feeling—dimension of his being. . . . How then, may subtlety and delicacy of sentiment and a discriminating taste be obtained? Man's daily experience in the natural course of his life normally contributes something to this development, just as it contributes something to the growth of his intellectual equipment. But precisely because the range of development which comes thus unaided is very limited there is a universally recognized necessity for a deliberately planned education going beyond that range.

Art is the language of feeling and the works of the various arts are the expression and record in communicable form of the feelings with which their creators were inspired. And works of art provide the means to the desired greater breadth and depth of acquaintance with the immense variety of human feelings. . . . And literature is the one art whose resources are beyond all other arts.

One asserts that the greatness of Literature cannot be decided by literary judgment alone but must include that which adds value to life in various ways, making it higher or wider or deeper. In other words, great Literature not only reveals the mind of man, it also shows the heart of man, and gives an insight into the soul. It is very important to note that Literature is a transmission of feeling which the writer has experienced; and great Literature conveys the best feelings of mankind—enabling men of later times to benefit tremendously through the experience of the great writers of all time.

It is a sad fact that reading—meant to be a blessing—actually becomes a vice when used to dull one's understanding

of the world and its duties. Just as some people turn to drink or to drugs to enable them to "forget everything"; so there are those who try to lose themselves in aimless reading. They will read anything and everything—and then forget whatever they have read! It is indeed a dangerous form of mental amnesia!

Reading that is truly beneficial must observe certain rules—

*Reading, like all recreation or work, has its rules. First:* A thorough knowledge of a few good writers is more valuable than a superficial acquaintance with a great many. One should search among books as one searches for true and helpful friends, and once these friends are found, chosen, and adopted, stay by them as you expect them to stay by you! Intimacy with a few great books will enrich one's whole life.

*Second:* In one's reading, great writers of the past must be given the most attention. Of course it is necessary to be familiar with those of the present, but it is vitally important not to submerge oneself in a sea of insignificant books; masterpieces are already so numerous that we can never know them all. Let us have faith in the choice of past centuries. Homer, and Shakespeare, and Holy Scripture have survived. We would do well to consider the reasons for such survival—and thus fortify mind, and heart, and soul!

*Third:* We must choose our literary nourishment well. Each mind requires its own particular food. Let us learn which authors are *our* authors. They may be very different from those of our friends. In literature as in love we are astonished at what is chosen by others. And they, perhaps, are just as amazed at our choice. But that is as it should be. The realm of literature is a real democracy where each one is entitled to select that which meets his personal need.

*Fourth:* Whenever possible our reading should be done in the atmosphere of composure and respect which surrounds an impressive and noble ceremony. It is not true reading to pick up a book when one's thoughts are elsewhere. We never get the best out of any author by treating him rudely, or by giving him the scraps of time we cannot give away elsewhere! It is not true reading to throw down a volume half a dozen times to answer the telephone or to read while listening to the radio, or have conversation sandwiched in between your reading! Let us at least be as courteous to an author as we would be to a friend we admire. Try to arrange an appointment with your favorite author when you can spend some time with him undisturbed, and such consideration will richly repay you. Do not be afraid to reread a favorite phrase or passage, and you will derive just as keen enjoyment from this practise as the music lover when he hears again some great melody presented by an inspired artist.

> Music wakes the soul, and lifts
> it high;
> Binds both God and man in
> sweetest tie!

The same is true of reading—if it is done in the right spirit!

*Fifth: Make yourself worthy of great books!* Remember the result of your reading depends not only upon the book before you but also upon the spirit you bring to that book. Emerson declared—"We live day by day under the illusion that it is the fact or event that means most, while really it is not that which signifies, but the use we put it to, or what we think of it."

So with your reading. Come to it earnestly, longing to get the best out of it, and giving your best attention to it. Then you will receive your appropriate reward. But if you come to your reading unwillingly, and even hostile in mind and heart, then you yourself have precluded the possibility of receiving real benefit. It is a tremendous adventure—this act of reading, and what it shall mean to you is for you to say! Your receptivity—your response to life and literature—there is the grand secret!

. W. Naylor writes, "The terrain of life is largely of our own choosing. may go on the upland way or down ugh the deadly swamps." The realm iterature is before you. Approach it nly with the mind, but with heart and sensitive to the best awaiting you, discover the wonderful treasures God s to truth seeking consecrated stu- s of literature. Above all, in your t for the best in life and literature—turn to the written and the living Word of God (I Peter 1:23; Rev. 19:13).

The written and the living Word—
The greatest message ever heard,
Revealing our Lord's plan to give
Peace and power each day we live!

The written and the living Word
New light, new joy, new strength afford;
Then let us offer God our praise
For all His blessings on life's ways.

# The Minister's Responsibility in Religious Education

The Rev. Kendig Brubaker Cully, Ph.D.
*First Congregational Church, Haverhill, Mass.*

WHEN a colonial Congregational Church called its pastor, it also called another staff member o was labelled the Teacher. The Pastor primarily responsible for the preach- of the Word, the celebration of the raments, and various pastoral minis- ions to the flock. The Teacher was rdained schoolmaster. He supervised school (which in those early days, of rse, was operated by the Church, as agency of the government in things itual and cultural; in fact the church the town were synonymous). That ient custom has persisted in the tradi- al form of call sometimes extended a modern minister, who usually is in- d to become Pastor and Teacher of the rch desiring his ministration.

The custom of having two staff mem- s has its counterpart in the modern fession of religious education director minister of education. But whereas a tively small church once upon a time ght have had two staff members h specialized functions, the same-sized rch today probably would never even am of being able to afford two. (Perhaps church financing was a little easier in a day when public taxes supported organized religion!) Hence the only professionally trained staff member in most churches today will be the Pastor.

There is a pronounced disinclination of many theological students to prepare in this field of their pastoral labors. When they get out into parishes they are confronted all at once with a multitude of educational problems for which they feel inexpert. This situation arises in part because of inadequate emphasis on education in the theological school, but more profoundly because the young men have not had a total educational point of view instilled in them along the way.

## I

At the outset let me make clear what I mean. Too often the minister conceives of religious education as essentially and exclusively the work of the church school. That, obviously, is the most articulate expression of education in the local parish but religious education has many wider ramifications. I would go so far as to say that the minister is at his best when

he thinks of all his functions as tied together in his work as the Pastor-Teacher (hyphenated) of the parish.

Now what are some of the implications of this view of the Minister as Pastor-Teacher?

For one thing, he will be the directing genius of the parish. In some old communities, of course, his genius may be there all right but the deacons or maybe the trustees are convinced that they are really the controlling power. The young person is likely to find himself very much frustrated when he realizes that his excellent ideas about parish administration bog down at the first church committee meeting he attends after arriving on the field.

Nevertheless, in most situations, the people will derive their fundamental sense of direction from the minister. If he does not have any sense of direction, then of course the parish will move nowhere fast.

His first opportunity to exercise an educational point of view will be in his relations with his governing board and with his various committees. It is appalling, but nonetheless true, that the average church committee has not the slightest conception of its functions. So often a committee has been elected year after year without any especial reason for the bother of having had votes cast for its members. The chairman of the Nominating Committee has called up Mrs. Jones and said, "Won't you please serve another term? We need you, you know." By now, Mrs. Jones, who already has served as chairman of the missionary committee for nine years and knows perfectly well that she never bothers to call a committee meeting—the little work to do is easier for the chairman to do by herself, you know—replies, feeling herself by now to be either a permanent fixture or an indispensable personage: "Well, I guess I can." And if a new person balks at taking some office, the Nominating Committee chairman will reassure him right off, saying dulcetly, "O I'm sure you won't find it arduous. The committee practically never meets

Happy the minister who is called a church with automatic rotation of o ficers according to terms of election, wi the proviso that at least a year must elap before a person is eligible for re-electic to the same office. Or, lacking such constitutional provision, happy the mi ister who is able to guide his church in adopting such a policy. His successo will rise up forever afterward to call hi blessed!

II

One of the first jobs of a minist may well be helping his committees discover their reason for being, and go on from that to a thoroughgoi prosecution of their work. Sometimes th will be a difficult and a thankless tas Sometimes the status quo is so deep established that the membership of a co mittee will resist self-analysis, not to me tion plans for progress. Yet it is w worth the effort. It is good for the mi ister to be adept in human relationship He needs to be tactful, never forgetti that a head-on attack will likely turn o to be a boomerang against his own us fulness. One cannot bludgeon a commi tee into creative accomplishment. It here that a man will be saved from feeling of futility if he has adopted educational attitude toward his relatio ships with his committees. A good teach knows that it is wise to start at the le of the pupil's present experience, buil ing up from there. One has to do th with one's church officers. If their p tential for growth is low, one will ha to accept the fact, and not expect to p form wonders with the impossible. B in most people there is more possibil than often we are willing to recogni One must be patient with the church ficer who does not yet comprehend eit his own potentiality or the full scope his duty. Help him to grow.

There is another aspect to this matt It is good for the ambitious parson ask himself occasionally: "Am I int

ed in the institutional efficiency of my urch to the exclusion of the spiritual velopment of my people?" The primary son for the establishment of committ-s, of course, is that they should do tain prescribed duties in the work of church. In another sense, however, can say that the committees—the work a whole—exists for the development the members' Christian personalities. educational point of view will help minister to do the two things at once: his workers grow in understanding of ir functions, they will also develop the titutional efficiency of their church to greater degree.

This attitude can show itself in the nning for a committee meeting. Let be careful to plan agenda well in vance of the meeting time, so that we n help to guide the discussions along nstructive lines. It is possible to de-lop a meeting in such a way that some ne is spent on material broader than st the immediate problems at hand.

Let me cite an example. The Finance mmittee, let us say, is discussing a cent problem laid in its lap by the Music mmittee. The Organist has been sick expectedly on a recent weekend, and e Music Committee has told the Or-nist that it was his responsibility to y the substitute organist. The Organist s objected, feeling that sickness was t his fault, that he should not be ex-cted to pay a substitute, for that is the usic Committee's duty. The Finance mmittee agrees with the Music Com-ttee. The minister observes that evi-ntly no definite policy has ever been tablished with regard to sick leave for e church staff. Suppose the Sexton ould become ill, what would be done, asks? From that the committee goes o a discussion about the desirability r the church to have just as carefully ticulated policies on this matter of reements and contracts with the em-oyees of the church as would exist in carefully run business organization. In e course of the discussion, gently guided by the minister, it is decided to investigate what the usual church procedure is, to get more details on the policies of school departments and business concerns, and to draw up a definite statement of policy to submit to the Church Council for consideration.

## III

In the course of such a discussion the committee members grow. They begin to see that what at first looked like a simple financial question had to do with human relationships with their employees, and good will, and the avoidance of future sources of conflict.

Or, again, take a church where the deacons have been performing their duties perfunctorily. They have served the Communion, and that's all. They have never dreamed they have any profounder function to perform than that. The minister was able to arrange meetings—heretofore the Finance Committee having been the only group in the church thinking of itself as having any reason to meet. By the use of some discussion sheets of self-analysis for a local parish's officers prepared by a denominational agency, he helped these deacons realize the importance and the dignity of their office. They thought it would be interesting to learn what other churches' deacons were doing. They arranged a joint meeting of the deacons of all the churches of the area, at which a speaker who had made a careful study of the place of the deacon in the church inspired the whole group to the fuller realization of their high office.

Sometimes the minister will work with committees—more often, he will be the teacher of individuals. It is amazing how helpful an unhurried hour or two of conversation with one's women's society president will be—or the church school superintendent, or the Scout Master of the Boy Scout Troop. If one is able to establish rapport with these key individuals in the parish—educating them by slow stages—these individuals will be able

to do a great deal more effective work than would otherwise be possible.

In his pastoral relations also a minister should remember his educational function. A counselling situation at its best is an educational opportunity, in that it should result in a person's having been helped to grow with regard to the particular situation at hand and its effects on his total personality. A good teacher does not talk all the time—just as a good counsellor does not. We need to help people think things through and solve their own problems. We can be helpers—that is all. It is much more difficult to be that kind of teacher or counsellor than it is to hand out ready-made answers, or to do all the talking oneself.

## IV

One has one's most marked educational opportunities by way of counselling in the case of conferences regarding the distinctive province of the church—baptism, marriage, funerals. It would be a very unwise pastor who failed to have a period of instruction with the parents of a baby about to be baptized or dedicated. Here is his chance to help them see the spiritual significance of this sacrament, and to help them realize their responsibilities as parents of a baptized child. The process of running to the minister to get married which always is so much caricatured in the motion pictures has been changed by devoted clergymen into a rich counselling experience for the couples they unite in marriage. The death of a loved one in a family of the church is a minister's opportunity not only to say words of sympathetic comfort, but to educate the family in the meaning of Christian immortality. He will not be a teacher in any too obvious way in situations like these —but rather he will carefully direct the conversation to unfold the inner meanings of these experiences.

The development of family religious life is another responsibility of the minister. He is in an especially strategic position to do something here. By working with the church-school departmental superintendents he can develop parents' discussion groups; in his pastoral visiting he can give concrete suggestions for enriching family life religiously; he can suggest helpful books and leave constructive pamphlet materials for the parents to read.

One should remember that he is a minister not only to the adults, but to the children and young people as well. In a large church, particularly, where the minister is likely to be cloistered in his study much of the time, or scurrying around to committee meetings the rest of the time, it is important that he find opportunities to get to know the children individually and in their church school classes. It is always good for the minister to drop in for a visit to each department once in a while. One child has heard a sermon in the church during which the rather austere clergyman referred to the Holy Spirit a number of times. Not knowing the minister as a person, the child asked his mother if by some chance the Rev. Mr. So-and-so were the Holy Spirit. It is an excellent idea for the minister to be available at all times as a resource person in the development of the church school program. Sometimes he can be invited to conduct the children's worship service. Again, he can conduct the children on a tour of the sanctuary, pointing out to them the furnishings, chancel and window symbolism, etc. In so doing he will be giving them actual information as a part of their training in church appreciation, and also enabling them to become familiar with him as a person rather than some dark, mysterious figure whom they regard with mingled awe and respect.

The Confirmation Class, or training class in church membership, for high-school-age young people should be the minister's direct responsibility. This is a field which has been developing wholesomely in recent years. Here and there we still find some irresponsible clergymen who do not see the necessity for

quate training of the young in the
nings of church membership, but
tunately such are becoming fewer con-
ntly. If the minister feels inexpert at
task, he will learn by trying various
hods. Incidentally, if the minister
etimes wonders why it is difficult to
volunteer teachers teaching, it will
good for him to undertake a long
firmation class program—for in teach-
the class he will learn some of the
blems every teacher faces!

he wise minister will make the class
imulating experience for all in it. It
d not be the drab sort of thing which
chetical classes once were. There are
e interesting techniques to use—for
mple, FIRST COMMUNION; the
NFIRMATION CEREMONY; the
ASS GIFT; the PUBLIC RECOG-
TION OF THE GROUP, etc.

## V

Through the planning of interesting
rship services the minister also can
rcise an educational function. Worship
he field in which the minister should
unusually competent. If a man does
have the capacity to construct wor-
p forms which will possess deeply sig-
cant meaning, he ought not to try to
rcise this vocation.

People need to learn how to worship.
ey do this through participation in it,
course—the established technique of
rning through doing. If we always
intain our level of worship at the same
or, without introducing a variety of
rms, we shall not be helping them to
w. It is wise to plan a year's worship
vices in advance, making sure that we
ll highlight certain things which might
erwise tend to be neglected. The Chris-
n Year offers us a wide variety of
phases: Advent and Lent especially.
e can use various great prayers of the
urch, so that our people will become
miliar with the liturgical traditions to
ich we are all heirs—and truly great
mns. One reason for the low state of hymn appreciation in our churches is that we have not taught the great hymns from earliest days up. Lifting standards has to begin sometime. If your congregation yearn (or part of the congregation who have been brought up on a certain hymn diet) for some of the older gospel hymns, plan hymn sings from time to time, or develop an annual hymn festival in which the place of the eighteenth-century hymns in the development of the hymnody of the Church can be shown—they may begin to see that what they call the old hymns are not really so old after all.

## VI

The law of learning known as repetition must not be forgotten either. We need variety and we need continuity—both are essential. It is good if we can provide people with both continuity of certain forms and at the same time occasional freshness of approach so that they will see new meanings in the old. I like to do that with the Sacrament of Holy Communion, that most ancient continuing symbol of our faith. On Maundy Thursday we use a very simple form of the Communion, followed by the fourth-century Office of Tenebrae. The deacons read selected scriptural passages, the Communion Table arranged in the form of a Cross. One by one the candles are extinguished, symbolizing the flight of the disciples on the Eve of the Crucifixion. Thrilling to see the reverence with which the deacons approach and execute that service, and the silence of the worshipers as they leave the darkened church to go out with a new sense of the reality of following Jesus Christ. A midnight service by candlelight is another type of thing which will provide freshness. The continuing element is the Birthday of Jesus. The freshness comes from going to church with the throngs of worshipers at that unusual hour—and going forth with the joy of earliest Christmas morning in their hearts. Whenever a new worship form is introduced it is good

for the minister to explain it thoroughly in advance of the experience, so that people will be familiar with what is to happen and not be bewildered by something so new as to be alien to their comprehension. Then they could not worship, of course, for then either it would be mere novelty, or something completely strange.

In his preaching the minister is a teacher also, as well as in his choice of readings from the Scriptures. The expository sermon needs to be used sometimes so that the pastor can teach his people the meanings of the Bible. In almost every sermon there will be some opportunity to do some teaching—illustration, direct informational approach, or otherwise. Even the imparting of inspiration itself can result in the growth of the spirit of the worshipers—and in that growing they are also learning. Sometimes a sermon can be preached which is entirely educational in nature, for example, a sermon on "What Is Christian Marriage?" The purpose will be to help people understand the basic principles which underlie the matrimonial vows made in the presence of God. In that sermon one might include some factual historical material and some statistical information. The preacher may hope to inspire some couples to stay married, and some potential marriages to be steered in the direction of a better and richer fulfillment. That kind of sermon is a responsibility which falls on all preachers from time to time. How shall they learn without a teacher?

As a resource person also, the minister can guide groups within the parish in the choice of good program materials. Oftentimes his word will be enough to bring a good speaker instead of some feeble irrelevant kind of thing which would be more appropriate for a gardening club instead of a church. The secularization of so many of our church groups everywhere is appalling. Men's clubs are notorious on this point. They will very likely tend to be glorified service clubs instead of churchmen's leagues. The minister may often be discouraged in his inability to keep every group geared to religious program-planning, but whenever he has an opportunity for subtle guidance he should be alert to seize it.

Sometimes a culturally impoverished community can be enriched through a minister's influence. Good films, visiting choirs, forums, reading clubs—there are many avenues through which a minister can exert influence toward raising standards of appreciation.

## VII

Another only slightly used medium of education is the publication of a parish newspaper or magazine. Oftentimes by judicious choice of materials for inclusion in a printed or mimeographed parish paper, a minister can bring things to the attention of the people which he cannot do in any direct communication.

Should the minister teach a class in the church school? Opinion varies about this. If there is no one else to do it, conceivably the minister has to teach a class. But beware of letting the people get the impression that the minister is always there to fall back on! He will be the first resort instead of the last resort if they know he always will be on deck to do the thing some others should be doing. Usually a minister needs to be fresh for his morning service—his primary Sunday responsibility. After teaching a class, he is not likely to have the poise he needs to lead the people in worship of the Most High. It is far better for the minister to teach teachers—to be the helper of the teachers, the supervisory teacher, for more often at that point the church will have no one else to fill the job adequately.

Sometimes the minister will find it good to do some actual formal teaching—in a class held at some time other than Sunday morning. Sunday is not sacrosanct for an adult class, for example. It is frequently possible to do a much better piece of work with an adult class at

kday hour rather than on a Sunday. o conclude, let me suggest again that minister as teacher is much more n just a functionary of the Sunday rch School. He has it within his ning and capacity to become, if he , educationally minded in his whole sh approach: as family counsellor, as or, as pastor of adults and children, rainer of leaders, as leader of worship, as parish executive, as adviser to committees. In this capacity—this wider vision of his task—he becomes as much a religious educator as anyone who professionally stresses religious education as a career in itself. And in so doing he will be more fully the representative in the Church of Him who was pre-eminently the Master Teacher of the Divinest Wisdom.

# The Preacher and the Lawyer

The Rev. John Clarence Petrie
*Houston, Texas*

A close friend of mine is the head of the largest law firm in Texas. Although ife-long Presbyterian (U. S. that is) he has taken a shine to my printed sermons. wice he has written me "You write like a lawyer. Did you ever have a license practise?" So I finally answered that I had been taught in my homiletics classes e following principles:

Have a theme
Have a thesis
Drive toward it and keep hammering away at it
Try to win them to it
Sit down

His reaction to that was to send me some instructions to lawyers on how to gue a case. They were written by Justice Story. My friend has had them pasted a paper weight which he has kept on his desk throughout his long life as a wyer. Here is what Justice Story advised:

Be brief, be pointed; let your matter stand
Lucid in order, solid at hand;
Spend not your words on trifles but condense;
Strike with the mass of thought, not drops of sense;
Press to the close with vigor, once begun,
And leave—how hard the task!—leave off when done.

It is to be noted that lawyers have as hard a time stopping as preachers; and t over-talking is as fatal to a court case as to a sermon.

# A Plea for an Agricultural Department in the School of Theology

The Rev. Ashley Day Leavitt, D.D.

*Brookline, Mass.*

[Dr. Leavitt read the delightful paper which follows before a group of ministers some months ago. It was their unanimous and enthusiastic desire that it be published in the QUARTERLY. Limitations of space have demanded some editing—but the substance is here. Two or three concluding pages on the technique and symbolism of "grafting," which would furnish any minister a sermon have been omitted. Perhaps in time Dr. Leavitt will put us into his debt by making an article of them.—THE EDITOR]

I ADMIT that this is a cumbersome title. My first thought for a subject for this paper was "Spiritual Law in the Natural World." But that I put aside as too pretentious. For a while I played with a somewhat snappier suggestion—"Through Soil to Souls," but I was afraid someone might be tempted to ask, "Why not 'Through Souls to Soil?'" as a more common phenomenon. I am merely pointing out how much spiritual wisdom has been gained in the process of agricultural experience, and what needed balance and checks may be derived from this field to keep sane any theology which tends to become theoretical and forensic.

* * *

I would suggest that in the field of agriculture man had his first educational discipline. It is true that long before any man had the idea that he could help things grow, he had a severe and beneficial discipline in the search for protection from heat and cold, and in his fishing and hunting for the food his body craved. The beasts also had this primitive training in the course of the struggle for existence. The pelican became as good a fisherman as man, and the tiger a better hunter. But no pelican ever grew any parsley to flavor and garnish his diet of fish, and no tiger ever had a dream of wheat bread to dip in the gravy of his monotonous meat courses.

Set down in this world of growing things, man's susceptibilities were played upon by a great variety of engaging objects and intriguing possibilities. It was a comparatively simple matter to discover the roots, the leaves, the seeds and fruits which were palatable and when eaten gave satisfaction. It was altogether a unique stimulus, and one that carried beyond the play of instinct, when a man discovered that he could assist in this business of growing things. Perhaps he first discovered that by pulling up the nearby growths that crowded his favorite plan he could produce a more vigorous and more fruitful development in things that he desired. Then someone found that by breaking up the baked or packed earth where the plant grew, with a pointed stick he could aid in the production of a better harvest. Bringing water from the river in times of drouth and draining away superfluous water in times of flood were found useful and were well rewarded. From such beginnings, all the way to the marvelous story of the production of the famous hybrid corn, man was enticed into a series of instructive adventures that must have played a significant part in the awakening and development of those powers which have made a human being out of him, and a human being with spiritual potentialities.

I

The first thing of importance in the education was that a man was allied with a power outside of himself. He had been

m the land, and within it and above ere the mysterious forces that made gs grow. There were also the seeds of plants already growing, from which to t the most useful and assist in their vation.

it even more important as an educa- l factor was this lure; this entice- to become a collaborator with the s that gave him his start and set him g. In many other phases of his early ntures, man was made aware of a r outside of himself. But apart from field of which we are speaking, this eness took the form of fear, or of and even adoration and worship. these were all non-participating ex- sions of interest. The power was over e, to be acknowledged, perhaps pla- l, or even bribed.

the field of our interest, man was being led along from one adventure nother in cooperation with mysterious es. There was no part in any single nture in which man was not con- nlly reminded that he had hold of one even if it were the very small end, significant partnership. In his work assisting nature a man was forced become an observer, investigator, an rimenter, and often when success has wned his efforts he has felt himself e assisting in some fresh miracle.

or has the end assigned to the hus- lman always been insignificant. There familiar story I often enjoy recalling n work in the soil is particularly hard. ells of a man who toiled early and and arduously to convert a forbidding of rocky ground into a garden. He eeded well enough to win an en- iastic commendation from a neigh- ng parson. "Well, John, you and God e succeeded in making a beautiful gar- out of this lot." And John could forbear to reply—"You ought to have the place when God had it alone." fter a particularly strenuous season, king to develop a young orchard, I med up at least a part of my experi- as follows,

With apologies to Joyce Kilmer.

I think that I shall never see
A poem as trying as a tree.

A tree whose hungry mouths demand
Such costly fertilizers on the land.

A tree that looks to God all day
While leafy arms require spray.

A tree that may in summer wear
A nest of caterpillars in her hair.

Upon whose bosom rust has lain
And insects incubate with rain.

No poem was ever writ by me
But I have helped God make a tree.

The first lessons and the first gains may have been on a material level, but very clearly as man's personal consciousness began to develop through these and other stimuli, the higher moral and spiritual implications of all this earthy and earthly lore must have begun to be apparent.

Whatever wisdom has been gained in this field, has been gained the hard way. No ten commandments cut on tables of stone were ever delivered to the tillers of the soil, to tell them what to do and what not to do. There have been no "revelations" brought to the men with the hoe, to the accompaniment of heavenly music. It is a grass-roots wisdom from start to finish and the theorist, unless his hands are well calloused, will find hard work getting a hearing.

Jesus' parables are a major part of his teaching, and perhaps the most original and distinguished part. When asked by his disciples why he spoke so much in parables, he said, "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given." Hence, the parables. I am not sure who these were to whom it had been given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. However that may be, most of the rest of us belong to those "to

whom it is not given," and we are thankful for the parables, and the fields of experience from which the parables were and still are to be gleaned.

We cannot do better than use three verses by T. T. Lynch.

He spoke of grass and wind and rain
And fig trees and fair weather;
And made it his delight to bring
Heaven and earth, together.

He spoke of lilies, corn and vines
The sparrow and the raven;
His words so natural and so wise
Were on men's hearts engraven.

And yeast and bread and flax and cloth,
And eggs and fish and candles;
See how the whole familiar world
He most divinely handles.

II

Let us say, then, that if man has not had the revelation of spiritual fact and law out of the soil, and his work in assisting in making many things grow, he has at least seen the shape of many a spiritual principle in the processes of growth before his eyes and under his hand, and has learned something about the stubborn laws of life of which it is good to be reminded in days when there is so much that is hap-hazard and casual in spiritual theory and practice.

Some time ago, when at work on a small farm, I felt the ground shake, and heard simultaneously a series of heavy explosions. It all came from a neighboring farm some distance up the road. I dropped my tools and wandered over. Arriving on the scene of the explosions, I found three men standing watchfully in a piece of rocky pasture. I joined them, and looked where they were looking. I could see an area strewn with the fragments of freshly broken rock, a lot of wreckage over half an acre. After a half hour it was concluded that all the dynamite had exploded, and I had learned the story. The attack had been made on a sprin which once sent an abundance of co water through a pipe to a wooden troug in the barnyard, an unfailing supply f the stock on that farm. The spring ha dried up two years ago, some said in prolonged spell of dry weather.

The experiment that afternoon had n been based on any proven practice. figured somewhere in the lore of th countryside that if you blasted the si of a spring that had failed, you mig open up the choked channels or ne channels to the underground supply water which now had no way to g through. Somebody said he knew a pla where it had worked, and knew a ma who said he had worked it.

It didn't work in this instance. I thin I heard the man who had just tried say he really did not expect it to wor It was just a stab in the dark, having n warrant or wisdom behind it.

* * *

A good many situations confront th Christian minister in his work to mak individual men fruitful in a spiritual wa and society more responsive to its mor responsibilities, situations that are di couraging and stubborn. Kindly and co structive appeal may long have seem ineffectual. It becomes hard to keep fro measures that arise out of desperati and even exasperation. A good man m be sorely tempted to "blast" away at e men and evil conditions. Taking John by the collar and shaking him vigorous with a "now will you be good," is a fa characterization of this method of t direct attack.

Here is a different story from the o which was enacted on the neighborin farm to mine. It is related in Lou Bromfield's book — *Pleasant Valley*. would make parts of that book requir reading in any school of theology.

Louis Bromfield went back to his bo hood's home to carry out a program soil reclamation. He bought up sever adjoining farms where the land had be

eted by over-cropping and neglect. ultimate idea was to produce abun- harvests. But such results were five s away. It takes a lot of self-re- nt and self-denial to do the spade necessary to build the soil that will self promote vigorous and satisfying th. You must forget the harvest for me being. Impatience to reap some- has been the bane of much of the ng done on our once naturally rich fertile farm lands.

five years' time of thorough and ul effort, Mr. Bromfield estimated he had done the work that had taken e thousands of years to do originally. st he had a good top soil. "Slowly, by week, and month by month, and by year, the whole of the landscape t us has changed, imperceptibly at until now it seems almost a new d. The half-starved look is gone."

he best part of this story, toward h I have been aiming from the begin- , is the story of another spring which failed to respond to the direct attack. One morning," writes Mr. Bromfield, the third year Pete came into my n, and said, 'Come up with me to the uson place, I want to show you thing.'

He wouldn't tell me what it was he ted to show me, but by the grin on face I knew that it was something l. . . . We walked up over the crest he hill where you have a view of e counties, and halfway down the pasture in a grove of walnut trees the thing that excited him.

There at our feet, bubbling from the roots of the trees, was the most tiful of sights, a new spring with a e-inch stream of clear cold water bling up in the midst of a pool which formed in the depression among the . Once, long ago, there must have a spring on the same spot, for nearby the red day lilies, and the pale n star of Bethlehem, which always k the site of a settler's cabin in our try, but as the land above had been farmed more and more badly, the spring had diminished and finally died.

"Then we had come to the place and anchored the soil above, and covered the bare earth in winter with cover crops, and turned much of the land back to sod, so that the falling rain no longer ran off the high hill, but sank into the earth to accumulate deep in the strata of the underlying sandstone. And so as the underground reservoir grew, the accumulated water at last reached a level where on this April in 1942, the old spring was reborn, gushing out from under the walnut trees as it had done when the first settler had come upon it.

"That spring has never failed since." This is the best illustration I know of an unfailing spiritual principle, that you have to do something here in order to get something there. You often have to do something now in order to get something later. What will it avail if God continues to rain "at our fountains," if the top soil of attitudes and responsiveness has become hard baked by too heavy pressures, and over-cropping, without sufficient attention to the subsoil of our natures?

* * *

Now to get back to the matter of soil. Today primary emphasis is on soil, rebuilding the soil, restoring its fertility, preserving its vitality. This emphasis is natural because years of surface farming and over-cropping have depleted millions of acres of what was once our best land.

It is not exactly fair to say that the slogan is—Take care of the soil and the soil will produce your crops. But that is the primary business of every husbandman. Nor is this a modern discovery. Jesus' parable of the sower is more accurately the parable of the grounds. Of course the sower was well qualified and the seed was certified. After that the question of the harvest was wholly a matter of the soil. There was packed, sunbaked earth without humus, there was stony ground without loam, there was

weed-choked ground without cultivation. There was good ground and abundant harvests. The condition of the ground is exclusively the concern of the gardener.

III

It is not difficult to imagine just what phases of our religious work are indicated by this problem of the soil. The whole Christian movement aims at increasing and deepening Christian life in people individually, and in organized society. At the point of production that means more people who have the spirit of Christ, and more of that spirit in those who have started in the way.

There can be no question that by and large Christian leaders and workers have been more concerned at the point of the harvest than over the conditions that make the harvest possible. There have been narrow conceptions of what the harvest is that we seek, such conceptions as that of increasing Church Membership, or multiplying the number of Confessing Christians. When these aims are stressed primarily there is a great danger of superficial cultivation, of forced cropping. In time the soil wears thin. It ceases to produce plants of proper stamina. I have seen some religious campaigns where the whole crop of converts secured would have better been ploughed back into the soil to enrich it for a later planting.

The spiritual fact that faces us today is not that we have too small an area of human life under Christian cultivation, but that the growth is weak. Our general Christian culture is thin and does not produce and sustain the stalwart Christian character that can withstand the blight, or resist the attacks of insidious pests, live through a drouth, or stand up under a deluge.

We lament the failure of Christians to play the part they ought to play in this time of crisis. We cry, "If only the Christians in our churches were what they should be, or half of what they should be, why, then, this world would be a different world." There would then l sufficient unity of aim, and an adequa supply of the cooperative spirit to lead confused world out of the present wilde ness.

* * *

What really disappoints us is the failu of the Christian crop of the last gener tion. And many husbandmen in t Lord's vineyard know nothing better do than to dynamite the failing sprin

What if we had the wisdom of t shrewd farmer, who surveys his deplet acres, minus the original fertility th had when his grandfather handed dov the farm, and concludes, "This is time to seek a crop, this year, next ye or the year after. It would be a cri against the soil to do so. We must forg crops for a while and restore the lar Some people may suffer, but it will because of past neglects and not account of this plan. This is the or plan which eventually will care for t whole population."

In 1854 Thoreau said, "We have us up all our inherited freedom." It m be too strong a statement to make t we have used up all our inherited Chr tianity. We have been living too long the afterglow of a great religious her age," mistaking it for direct light. T strain of the present-day Christianity lost some of its earlier vitality.

If we have used up all our inherit Christianity, if we have been living invested capital, then there is nothing us to do but to go out and get us so Christianity of our own.

* * *

There is no doubt about there bei these two parts to all aggressive Christi efforts—1, the increase of Christiani and 2, the development of a deeper Chr tian discipline and culture from whic finer type of Christian character spring. Remember, Paul may plant a Apollos water. God giveth the increa Henry Nelson Wieman urges us to

mber that God does not make things. grows things. He effects the growth things, at least in the agricultural area, ough the soils in which things are ted. The best spiritual method is the irect method.

As I see it, we should be saying some-ng like this. We are truly sorry that cannot furnish the world in these gic days the sort of inspired faith and vice that might be expected from so ny and so strong Christian groups as have. We cannot furnish the world n the inspiration or the leadership, the general support needed for the essary cooperation—that will mean a united effort. We cannot show anything in the area of our own attempts at unity. There is no sense in berating the Christians in groups or individually. If the Christian culture of our time had the depth and richness it should have, there would be instances, at least, of apostolic wisdom and courage.

In fact we cannot think too much, for the present, about the impact the Christians of the world may be making at the frontiers of the world's great need. We have some spade work to do. Five years from now the land may begin to lose its barren look, and old springs may start flowing again.

# Preachers Talk It Over

The Rev. Percy C. Ladd
*287 Fourth Ave., New York, N. Y.*

THE paper on preaching had been stimulating. Its clichés had been few. Its sincerity had been deep, thout affectations of piety. Best of all, had been aware that this was the twen-th century, and not the first, or even nineteenth. There had been the usual awing in of breath, the customary com-ndations of the chairman, in this case nest, and then the familiar words, "The pic is now open for discussion. Will u begin?" as he turned to the man on right.

He was a man in his forties, the pastor a "strong" church in a small New gland city. He claimed a good educa-n, and made pretensions toward "pas-al advising." Books on psychology re plentiful in his library, and "prob-ns of youth" were his ready theme. o me it is clear that today effective eaching must be aimed at the welter of ods that have sprung up in the kind world we find ourselves in. Whether like to admit it or not, we are largely creatures of our housing shortages, the overhanging threat of war, high prices, and the eternal war between the animal and the spiritual in us all. What is our duty as preachers if it is not to speak of these personal issues, and help people meet the frustrations they feel? So what I do is to take some problem of living that I feel keenly myself, and others feel. Take fear, for example. I marshal the ideas that will help them get the better of fear. I remind them about faith in life, in the world, in the goodness there is in man, and in themselves. And then I speak about religious faith, and how useful it is. To me that's real preaching, taking a life problem and showing people how to solve it."

Mr. ——— was restless as he was listening, and he spoke without delay. "This is good as far as it goes, but it doesn't go far enough, nor deep enough. The problem you take up may be a concern of only a few; what are the others going to do all through the sermon? There is something more fundamental than happiness, or contentment, or 'adjustment,' that well-

worn word. The only real bedrock problem for us all is goodness, doing right, sin, being right with God. And that we know takes subsoil plowing. You have got to be right in order to do right; and somehow we preachers have got to get people to be right in their hearts. They have got to be clean in their souls, their springs running pure. They have to be given a self-starter. The glory of commitment, the power of a good life, the beauty of virtue, the ugliness of sin, the glory of the character of Jesus, meeting a holy God in our conscience—these are what I try to preach. I try to make them so real that people will go away, wanting to be better, and helped to be better. You know there is nothing so thrilling as to have some one come to you and say, 'You helped me to a better life.' "

* * *

"Yes, I suppose you are right, but I am not so sure." The speaker was the pastor of a church in a small village, mostly rural. He was one of the fortunate men who have many contacts with the townsfolk beyond those of the usual minister. As agent for the state, for the health of the herds, he went in and out among the farmers, and knew their life and the ways of men. "The longer I live the more I see the need of simple goodwill, and fairness and honesty and kindness and ordinary decency. It's what people do that counts. They usually have enough knowledge to do right as it is; and their consciences are generally acute enough. What they need is to do the things they know, and to be reminded of these things. You probably won't agree with me, and will think that I am little but a top-soil preacher, but what I do is to talk to my people about being kind and forbearing and forgiving, not being hard, not casting the first stone. I urge them to look at their side of the window pane first, to try to understand people and why they do what they do, and how we would probably act if we were in their places. I say in effect what the Elder said in the New Testament letter, 'Littl children, love one another.' I urge ther to feel that way even about Russia. An I tell them that he that loveth knowet God, for God is love. I suppose I am little like Mr. Gilfill in *Scenes fro Clerical Life,* who used to go aroun with candy in his pockets for the childre and counsels of kindness for thei parents."

* * *

Across the circle sat an athletic youn man on whose watch fob hung a gol football as well as a key, and he spok next. "Far be it from me to say any thing against Dr. ———, whose ever word is always an oracle for me, but can't help thinking that things aren't quit so simple in our parishes as he say There are lots of folks who are trouble with questions and doubts about the worl and reality and life. Our congregation even in the country, are getting to hav a good many college graduates, and som of them are from colleges where they a really taught to think for themselve Some of them come to me with the questions. I believe we should have thes people in mind when we are preachin I know I do. I just face up to the problems. I bring them out. I look th ground over, and frankly tell them wha we have a right to believe, and what w haven't. I acknowledge that we have t go ahead often without being certain abo lots of things we want to know. I tr to be realistic, but I show them how cou age, and faith and goodness are also part of the real, as well as are wrong, an the red clay of nature, and the lemmin instinct in man. I try to sit down befo life and understand just what it is, an what it isn't. Maybe it's the theology o Nature that I preach; but I think w ought to preach what we see. I thin we get farther that way."

* * *

It was clear that not everyone wa agreeing with this, and it was not lon

ore objection was raised. It came from pastor of one of the lesser churches the Association, quiet, sterling, such constitute the rank and file of our gy. It was evident that he had walked simpler ways of life, unacquainted h the Ivy League, for example, and constituent sources. "I suppose I am fashioned but it seems to me that e is more to it than our young brother said. You know that in this matter belief we Christians have what we the body of the Christian faith. It omething that in its broad lines has e down to us through the Christian uries. It is to be found especially he New Testament. It answers the pest longings of the human soul. Be- ed and practiced, it produces the best in the individual and in society. That's y we know it's true. It takes an act faith to accept it, I know. But it is t we have as our Christian faith, and hink we ought to preach it. People ht to know it and feel it. It is not nething that is complex. Just listen to little creed. It was given to the dergarten in one of my churches: 'I eve in God above. I believe in Jesus' e. I believe the Spirit true, who comes teach me what to do. I believe that hould be pure and good, dear Lord, Thee.' And let me add, the greatest aching is what makes these truths real. on't think we ought to be afraid to ach theology, good theology. Our ple would welcome it. They surely d it."

* * *

A tall, dark young man in his thirties an urge to speak. He had been ught into the ministry through courses he Bible in college, and a chief interest ad remained. Some of his most de- tful and rewarding experiences had n with groups, opening up the Bible literature, and the creation and the tor of faith. "It seems to me that first function of the pulpit is to cul- te faith among our people. First of all our own faith, for if it isn't real to us it can't be to them. But more than our own faith, the faith of others too. Now just look at the treasury of faith that we have in the Bible. But just see how little our people use it; how little they know how to use it. With all respect to Miss ——— here, who is such a real help to us all in our Sunday Schools, our church schools seem to drive children away from the Bible instead of attracting them to it. I don't mean that all the Bible is of equal value, or that some of it is of any value at all for us Christians. But what I do mean is that this mine of faith must be opened up to our people. They must be made to realize it, and shown how to read it. This is what I try to do in my preaching. You have no idea what an exhaustless mine it is. Talk about preaching life; if you don't find it here I don't know where you will find it. And think how little people know what is in it."

* * *

"I like what our friend has just said, but I think there is something more than that for our preaching in the Bible, at least there is for me." He was an elderly man, white of hair, with a vigor that belied his years. He had come into the ministry through the door of the YMCA. He was known and respected among his ministerial friends for his practical turn, and for his evangelistic spirit. "I know," he went on, "that it is customary nowadays to talk about presenting the Bible from the literary, historical and religious viewpoints. We tell our people that it gives rich insights into life, and we show them what grand suggestions for our own faith come from the experiences of the worthies of Scripture, like Moses, Samuel, David, Jonah, Peter and Paul, and of course, Jesus, the highest of all. But for me, the Bible is more than 'the best we know,' and all that; it is the actual Word of God. It is more than sign posts to truth, it is Truth itself. I regard it as authority, not as some of my friends do,

as a handicap. Of course, as you know, I am not a Fundamentalist, and I don't preach the Bible as they do. But I think we lose a great deal by not setting forth this Book as a sort of Constitution for our Christian life and faith."

* * *

There are two in the circle who had not spoken. While one of them was musing his fire burned, and at last he spoke. Modest he was, of keen mind, known as the best thinker in the group. He had never bowed the knee to Baal, nor entered the house of Rimmon. He recognized social sin when he saw it. He realized how things ought to be, and was more sad than anything else for man's inhumanity to man. He had no easy conscience himself, and no listener could have either, but he would remember years later that Mr. ——— had earlier seen what he now saw. "What is preaching for me? When I sit down at my desk, I think of the nations with the body of death about their necks, all marching together into the next war, that inevitable atomic war. I think of the young men whose life was torn from them, unwitting. I think of the darkies in Alabama growing up on bacon and grits. I think of the unwilling victims of Dutch rule. I see the millions of Americans, more than half of them Christians, and it comes over me how little real influence they wield over public affairs. Yes, I hear some of you, and I don't hear you speak out on these things very often, with courage. You have your reasons, I know, good ones to you. But our pulpits are fiddling while Rome burns. This last registration day should have been a day of national humiliation. We invoke God when we should be writing to our Congressmen. Let's be more informed, more forthright, that we may build God's kingdom in America's green and fertile land."

* * *

He stopped, and the eyes of the group turned toward the guest of the morning. He was known to some of them. He ha been a pastor in those parts, but he wa now retired. "I hardly know what t say," he began, "the longer I live th less I seem to know about preaching. know what we want to do. This summe I saw an ad for fishermen, 'worms tha squirm.' I know this, that our sermon ought not to make our hearers squirm I will just take a leaf or two out of m own years. I have a great sympathy fo the last speaker, for if I had followe my weekly inclination, I should have trie to be an Amos or a Jeremiah. I ma have a record, I am not sure. Three me that I know of stopped coming to churc because of what I said in the pulpit, newspaper editor, a judge, and the 'rule of the queen's navee.'

"I presume that I should have bee a reformer of sorts if it had not bee for my wife, and a remark of one c my early laymen. It was at the time c the League of Nations controversy, an I had hailed that vision of world o ganization as the Parousia. One Monda morning this layman said to me, 'The are three rules of preaching from th standpoint of the pew, at least. 1. B vivid. 2. Be vivid. 3. Be vivid!' The as I knew more about people's lives, an as they told me more, or didn't need t tell me, I began to take up various prol lems of life, ill-fortune, perplexitie doubts. 'Life-centered' I believe the wo is. I did my best to marshal all the he I could find from literature, histor biography, 'life,' the Bible, the Christia faith. I felt it my chief duty to buoy t the spirits of my people, and inflate the balloons of hope. I made my sermons spiritual as I could, and brought my hea ers step by step as I was able before Go I used the Bible as I thought expedien I should have used it more if in the days people knew it more.

* * *

"Implicit in all I preached were t great affirmations of the Christian fai

t since I have been listening to ser-ns instead of writing them, I have gun to be a bit uncertain whether this the best way after all. When I hear e-centered' sermons, I sense a certain dequacy about them, even when they ss what God can do to help us. It is same, though to a less degree, when ear sermons on social themes. In the e way I hold as suspect sermons that mainly about God. They are liable ose touch with life on this earth. They often are not specific enough about t our own duties are. Then one day eard a sermon that went to the spot. u realized that the preacher knew life ply and widely, and that he knew God t as well.

What he did was to take three vi-ettes from the Bible that told of God's nection with humankind. He brought glory and the beauty and the love God right into connection with what s going on within and around us. You could just feel the spirit in the congregation, that here was a reservoir pouring out water through irrigation ditches into a hundred fields. As I listened I said to myself, Here is the secret of good preaching. A sermon is an ellipse, every point equidistant from the two foci, God and life. A little later I felt sure I was right when I got a letter from my granddaughter in the great city, who has continued her churchgoing into a habit. For a while she attended a church where the sermons were more emotional than her New England makeup could stand. Now she is going, for lack of a more satisfying church, to hear a gifted prophet and satirist, whose sermons she describes as 'witty and clever.' One Sunday this summer she heard a visitor from England. 'There,' she wrote us, 'was a real sermon. He took a familiar passage of Scripture, and he connected every bit of it with people, events, one's own self. It was just grand.' "

# The Preacher as Teacher

The Rev. Robert C. Yoh, Pastor
*The First Congregational Church, North Troy, Vermont*

THIS is a day and age when it is most difficult for the preacher to know if he should be a prophet a priest. With a chaotic social order ch as the world reels under in these nes a prophet is sorely needed—a spokes-an, a holy man "divinely mad" must eak out against the hatreds, the bigot-s, the injustices of the times. And o in a world so desperately torn and ounded, the healing comfort of the iest is urgently wished for—an inter-ssor, a comforter who can through uietness and confidence" bring men to awareness of the nearness of God, too has his place.

And so it is that the prophet and the priest are needed; and yet possibly a preacher who is something more than either of these (or both of them) can help to guide and minister to our confused day—a preacher who is in a real sense a teacher.

This may at first seem strange. Never in the world's history have people been more learned. Radios, motion pictures, a host of magazines and journals and books are readily accessible in most corners of the earth. We are well-acquainted with foreign and domestic news, with science, with art. But one wonders how well we are acquainted with the things that pertain to the spirit and to God.

These are not easy times in which to be a preacher. Not easy times, but challenging! Yet precious few ministers seem to be fully aware of the real challenge. Young preachers fresh out of seminary so often scold their people. More seasoned preachers so often mouth pious little nothings that please and lull to sleep.

In *The Robe,* Lloyd C. Douglas has Marcellus say of the writings of Cicero, "He has written articles that pick flowers, but never sweep the sky." Could the same thing be said of our sermons? Is it possible that we are too anxious to please, and not anxious enough to teach?

Christopher Morley has Toulemonde in a poem by that name make this classic observation:

"Most of all men, I adore
Who tells me what I knew before,
And with such tact, that we agree—
Not I with him, but he with me."

Are we too anxious to make Toulemondes of our people? If we constantly take our themes from *The New Yorker* or the daily papers (and this has been known to happen), are we not guilty of telling them what they knew before? It will be admitted this is one extreme in modern preaching. The other extreme is when preachers (themselves too worldly and bewildered) re-echo the words of Wiley in his last command to the crew of the falling United States Navy dirigible *Akron,* "Stand by to crash!"

Mark you this—our people *will* crash if not given a faith by which to stand. They know all too well by now what they cannot believe in. The time has come for them to know what they *can* believe.

THE CALL To Our Congregational Christian Fellowship, that fine work put into our hands by the Commission on Evangelism and Devotional Life might well be the balm for our present-day Gilead. Each paragraph is a sermon in itself—these are the things we must know, and these are the things we must do. But we must be taught to do them.

Surely we as preachers must not be guilty of talking down to our people. There is an unpleasant little story about the preacher who was asked how he prepared his sermons. He said, "Every Saturday I go out into the garden and try out my sermons on the cabbages and pretend they are people. Then on Sunday I preach them to the people and pretend they are cabbage heads." Such an attitude (even if modified) will not suffice! Our people must be taught a faith to live by. We preachers must wrestle with themes too great for us, and we must preach in love, and in a mood of compassion.

And the themes? Mercy, the judgment of God, man as the "son of God," Christ the cross, repentance. Albert W. Palmer has furnished themes a-plenty when he says: "These are the words that must govern life or we shall perish—honesty fair play, goodwill, patience, creative industry, non-violence, forgiveness, cooperation, long-suffering, and unselfish love.' These are the words that not only govern life; these are the words that will save life.

The modern mind is sick—sick unto death with fear and horror and littleness and neurosis. Scolding will not help much nor lullabys. The modern mind must be delivered up to the surgery of the Gospel and healed, and then given back to itself. This is a labor of love for all who would call themselves Ministers of the Living God and of the Christ and of the Word.

The present generation, and the fathers of the present generation do not know the Gospel. They have not read it for themselves. They do not know how to pray. They do not know how to hope. Our role, then, is three-fold. We must be prophets, for never was prophecy more needed. We must be priests, for the chasm between man and God is all too vast. We must be teachers, for men need to be taught a faith to live by. Thus remaineth prophecy, intercession, teaching—and the greatest of these is teaching.

# Pastoral Prayer for the First Sunday in the New Year

The Rev. Milton F. Schadegg
*The Park Avenue Congl. Church, Arlington, Mass.*

ETERNAL and indwelling God, our Heavenly Father, unto whom alone are known the mysteries of time and space and energy, we acknowledge on this holy day that we are really the infinitely small in the presence of the Infinitely Great. The stars that measure and foretell thy power are revealing more of their thrilling mysteries. "The heavens declare thy glory and the firmament showeth thy handiwork." The materials of earth stand in readiness to yield undreamed power and promise as we, thy creatures, work in the laboratories of new discovery.

Tensely and expectantly we peer into the forecast of this year; and we knew that to those who trust thee all things will work together for good. Of old did the prophet and martyr and saint test thy truth; and thy glory that is yet to be revealed is wondrous to anticipate. So we come today, to renew our vows of faithfulness and holiness, asking that thou wilt hear our prayers and grant us the confidence of thy salvation.

For the witness of thy love, thy guidance, thy mercy in the days past we give thee thanks. For the blessings of home and loved-ones, of friends and fortune, of work and wisdom we offer thee our heartfelt praise. For the joyous Christmas and Epiphany time we bless thee. As the wise men did worship of old, so may all modern men of wisdom follow the star to the revelation of thine Eternal Word and thine everlasting peace to men of goodwill.

Deeply we sense a world-wide yearning for better days of harmony, integrity and opportunity. And we know, O God, that only by trust and prayer and work will we see the fulfilment of these good things. Grant thy blessing upon all who unite in daily prayer. May the needs of one and many be sharpened in our insight; and may the persuasion of spoken faith be a personal ministry in our souls.

Help us, our Father, to *hear* the cries of suffering; and use us as thine instruments of mercy. Help us to *see* the opportunities for richer fellowship in our community; and quicken our desire to be ever more friendly. Help us to *feel* the joys of stewardship and the ministries of beauty in home and church, in town and nation. Direct our generosity that it may be full and fair. Guide our hands that they may create and nurture the best we know. Awaken our minds to some new truth each day. Bless our hearts with the power of good intentions. And in all things urge us to be zealous of good works!

For the leaders of our community and nation and world we raise our special prayers at the beginning of this new year. Do thou bless the good that they do; and forgive them the evil of greed and intrigue. Take from their hearts selfishness, and from their eyes the shortsightedness that has brought misery to many. Abundantly endue them with the wholesomeness of the common man; and teach them by the sure rod of thine immutable justice that only as they live worthily in thy sight will the foundations of law and prosperity be strengthened. Guide us in intelligently upholding the precious heritage of Christian ideals in all the world.

For the sick and the sorrowing we pray thy comforting and healing presence.

Give them a trusting issue out of all their affliction; and bring to each hungering heart the bread of life.

Hear now the silent prayers of all who bow before thee. Speak to each waiting heart according to its need as we continue in silence. SILENT MEDITATION. CHORAL RESPONSE.

# The Opportunity of the Rural Church

The Rev. Thomas Alfred Tripp

RURAL churches in the United States have had a history coextensive with the life of the nation. Since there were no cities, all churches were rural at the beginning. From the founding of the colonies to the early years of the Twentieth Century, country and village parishes grew up everywhere without much awareness of their own special characteristics and special opportunities. They behaved as rural parishes but were relatively unconscious of the peculiar environmental factors which distinguished them from urban churches. The rural church has now become a conscious, recognized movement.

## I. THE CHURCH AND RURAL CULTURE

### *What Is a Rural Church?*

The rural church dominates the ecclesiastical scene. Three-fourths of all churches and synagogues in the United States are rural. In other words, three out of every four congregations are rural while only one in four is urban. There are approximately 175,000 rural churches in the nation, about 65,000 being in the open country and 110,000 in the rural towns.

These statistics are based on the definition of a rural community as determined by the United States Bureau of the Census. The Bureau designates as rural, a community of 2500 or less. Thus, any church which is located in the open country or in a town of less than 2500 population is a rural church.

A more significant description of the rural church is to be found in a cultural definition. Rural culture is that way of life which is related to the extractive industries—farming, forestry, mining, fishing and other vocations directly concerned with the production of the raw materials of natural resources. Agriculture is the greatest factor in country life; therefore the farm and the farmer receive a major share of attention in any consideration of the rural church. The small town, and usually the larger town in a dominantly agricultural region, serves the farmer and is conditioned by the surrounding country life. Likewise, the trading centers for each of the other extractive industries are peculiarly affected by them. Such a center is known as a rural town because it is largely of one piece with a larger community which includes the surrounding open-country areas. Rural churches are those affected by rural cultural factors.

### *What Is Rural Culture?*

Rural culture is the socially organized and transmitted structure of behavior and thought of rural people, as Ralph Turner suggests. It consists of the traits and patterns which are historically derived and which combine to act as an integrating force for individuals and groups in rural society. Rural culture is a complex of the ideas, ideals, beliefs and social habits which unify and control the behavior of people who are related to the extractive industries. In the main, it is the mode of life in an agricultural society. While rural society is always dynamic, it has

stability and is not greatly subject to change. The comparative isolation of wide sections of rural life retards the infiltration of new ideas and, as a result, rural culture usually lags behind the trends of general civilization.

Rural culture is composed of the factors which create and condition the rural mentality. The rural mind is adjusted to natural resources and human relationships in the relatively simple neighborhood. In its simplest form, rural culture is the outgrowth of the vocation of farming. Rural culture originated with the frontier farmer who tilled the land by manual labor. It is oriented to the peasant who walks behind the plow or wields a hoe.

However, it must be remembered, that most rural people do not conform to the pattern of peasant culture, though the peasant group is still a very large factor in America. Some are sub-peasants who have neither an adequate relationship to the land nor the love of soil. These are migrants, sharecroppers and rural slum-dwellers. At the other extreme, there are the prosperous, landowning machine-farmers to whom land may be a resource to be exploited and who are not bound to place by poverty. Still other rural people live in the towns which are often most highly affected by the encroachment of urbanization upon village and country life.

The qualities of rural culture and of the rural church have much in common with urban culture and the city church, while retaining distinctive characteristics of their own. There are wide variations within both rural and urban societies. Due to a shading of characteristics and their mutual interpenetration, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between them. However, for purposes of study and work it is possible to group communities into two general types, the rural and the urban, and to adapt programs to the peculiar needs of each.

*Rural Church Movement*

The modern rural church movement in America has experienced three stages of evolution. The first phase began in 1909 with the origin of the country life movement which arose largely as a result of the report of the Commission on Country Life appointed a year earlier by President Theodore Roosevelt. It was ended about 1919 by the changing social conditions which accompanied the close of World War I. During this period, religious leaders were busy exploring the meanings of the country life movement for the rural church.

The second stage extended throughout the 1920's and the early 1930's, approximately from the close of World War I, through the Great Depression. It may be characterized as the period of testing and of practical application of the rural philosophy under local community conditions. A socio-religious approach produced the "larger parish" and other techniques for adjusting churchmanship to the rural cultural environment. This community emphasis in rural religion became one of the factors that helped to initiate the beginnings of the program of social action which is now a general force affecting urban as well as rural churches.

Finally, depression conditions and the passing of the first generation of rural church leaders brought in the third and current phase of the movement. By 1936, practically all the stalwarts of the earlier stages of the rural church movement had passed from the scene of action by death, retirement or change of vocation. There was inaugurated a period of readjustment and integration in which the rural movement began to relate itself more closely to the life of the whole church and to adapt the theory and techniques of practical theology, religious education, missions, social ethics, sociology of religion and the theological disciplines to town and country culture.

In this phase rural leaders have before them the task of giving further expression to the rural philosophy in the church and of entering more fully into the ideals of a churchmanship adapted to the needs of

the new social frontiers of rural society.

*Rural Social Sciences*

The present phase of the rural church is attempting, also, to capture the resources of rural sociology, rural education, rural welfare and farm economics for the town and country parish. This emphasis has been enhanced by the interest which the sociologists have taken in rural institutions, including the church. In turn, many town and country church leaders have become students of rural sociology; some of them are trained and recognized rural sociologists.

Rural sociology seeks to describe and analyze those human groups which live by agriculture and the other extractive occupations or by occupations immediately dependent upon them. "Rural sociology is concerned with the relations of rural people to each other, the relations of rural people to national and world populations, with the rural standard of living, and with the social problems which attach themselves to life and labor on the farm and in farm communities." The interests of the rural church include the issues of rural sociology which, in turn, is making a valuable contribution to rural religion.

Rural education and rural religion have much in common. Rural education is the process of initiating persons into a growing understanding of the general knowledge of civilized people, the skills of rural vocations, the lore of rural culture and the techniques of rural social living. The rural school has become a special field of education which provides an additional resource for the rural church.

Farm economics or agricultural economics is that branch of general economics which deals with such problems as farm prices, management, marketing, income and land policy. This rural science can be useful to rural ministers who will study the results of its research.

Rural welfare has developed in recent years as a specialized branch of social welfare. The depression and relief called forth workers and literature concerned with rural welfare. The rural minister may greatly enrich his knowledge of rural life by acquainting himself with this field of rural work.

In spite of tremendous handicaps and limited resources, vital churches are to be found in many rural villages and open country areas throughout America. Some of these churches are the social and spiritual centers of their respective communities because they are making the best possible use of their resources in effectively meeting their great opportunities.

Unfortunately, all rural churches do not represent such a wholesome situation. Too often, there is a routine of religious services which has little meaning and a program that is entirely inadequate. Such churches need to develop a socially significant, educational approach for their work if they are to have the fullest possible pertinence to rural persons and communities.

The effective rural church demands a sound theory of education for dealing with individuals, an adequate knowledge of the dynamic everchanging rural culture for working with community forces and a socially pertinent interpretation of redemptive religion for recovering the deep mysteries of human existence and the spiritual values of rural life.

## II. THE FUTURE OF THE RURAL CHURCH

*Is the Country Church Dying?*

There is a popular notion that the rural church is "dying out." Some people seem to take fiendish delight in telling how fast country churches are passing out of existence. Others utter dark lamentations about it. But there are not many who know just what the situation is and fewer still who seem to be doing anything about it.

The truth is, many country churches have been closed. Some have died which should have done so, many should never have been born, a few now living should probably cease to exist and others which appear alive are already dead without

nowing it. Some parishes have died hich should have lived and many that e expiring should be saved from anni- lation. Some died a natural death, many ed by violence through bad over-head iministration and others simply commit- d suicide by factional disputes and in- fference.

*verlapping*

In the first place too many churches have en organized. As the frontier was set- ed there was a strong tendency toward er-expansion by every institution, in- ding the churches. Sectarianism and mpetition prevailed, particularly during e "denominational era" from about 1815 1900 when each communion sought to stablish churches in every community. onsequently, too many churches were arted at the beginning. New parishes are ill being formed and, in spite of losses, umerous localities have several competing ongregations. In some places there are o many churches that they may all fail ke corn which is planted too thick. The ituation must now be viewed with com- non sense and necessary adjustments nade.

A recent study of rural churches in a vestern state identified four stages in the life cycle" of the churches from the fron- ier period onward; namely, (1) the for- nation of congregations, (2) the erection f church edifices, (3) the maintenance f the congregations, paying for the church uildings and support of the pastor, and 4) the death of unwarranted churches. One might wistfully add a fifth stage as hat of readjustment and interdenomina- ional cooperation. The first two stages vere practically accomplished by the end f the pioneer period. At present we are till struggling with the problems of the ther three.

North Dakota is a good example of this rocess. Missionaries of many commun- ons established congregations as fast as he territory was settled. They built hurches, sometimes several in a single ommunity which could hardly support one. Since then they have been gathering new members, organizing their forces, raising money for current expenses and struggling to pay for church buildings. Recently, even though feebly, the Protestant denominations have begun to cooperate in making readjustments to correct overlapping and unreached situations. In 1936 there were 43 denominations represented in the state by 2,097 local churches. During the preceding ten years 721, or over 31 out of every 100, churches of all denominations were closed. In the same period 546 new or revived churches appeared, 256 of which were in the open country. However, the "death rate" of open country parishes in North Dakota was nearly 46 per cent as compared to about 24 per cent for village churches and only 14 per cent in the cities. At the same time new churches were formed at the rate of 28 per cent in the country, 21 per cent in the villages and 16 per cent in the cities.

This picture shows a great turn-over of churches, especially in the country. With some churches being abandoned while others are opened, it is very difficult to get a clear view of the situation. As far as North Dakota is concerned a few facts are fairly evident, however. More churches are being closed than opened. More churches are closing and reopening in the country than in towns or cities. Apparently there will be fewer churches in the state in the future than now exist and the open country will experience the greatest net loss.

*Villageward Trend*

After over-churching, the most serious cause for the closing of country churches is the shifting of farm populations and the concomitant trend of rural people and institutions to towns and cities. The loss of farms by their operators in recent years has resulted in a higher percentage of tenant farmers. Tenants move from farm to farm and from community to community resulting in an unstable country neighborhood. When the tenancy rate exceeds 50 per cent in a given locality the church be-

gins to decline. Old people retire from the farm, settle in town and join the church there. Younger people go to the towns and cities to work leaving the country church behind. Many of the more prosperous farmers, not to be outdone by the city-bound Joneses, have joined the church in a nearby town. All this takes so much strength from the crossroads church that it is often starved out for lack of people and support.

The effects of the village-ward trend upon the countryside is revealed by the fact that since 1920 farm population in many localities has declined, while that of rural towns has increased. With the aid of automobiles and good roads farmers are going to the towns and larger centers to trade, thereby killing many country and hamlet stores. Consolidated schools are usually located in towns while the surrounding country districts are discontinued. Left alone, the country church has a tendency to decline. The remaining rural churches are centered more and more in the villages. When a country parish becomes seriously weakened it is often yoked or "consolidated" with one in town, or it may die and the members who have sufficient religious interest may join a town church. Still others just vote to move the church, sometimes building and all, to the village.

Due to modern developments the crossroads church, like the country store and district school, follows the village-ward trend. However, the church is the last of the three to die out in the farm neighborhood. In fact, the country store goes first. Albeit, the most disturbing factor in the situation is the fact that when the church goes to town it does not take its constituency with it to nearly as high a degree as other institutions. Hence, many farmers are left without religious services. Furthermore, weakened country churches, especially those on circuits and those which for various other reasons have a part-time or poorly prepared ministry, are not doing very efficient work as compared to town or city parishes.

*Approaching Stability*

Making comparisons between 1920 and 1930, the report of the committee on Recent Social Trends says, "A surprising number of open country churches survived. . . . The closer to a village the open country church is located the less chance for survival, but in the zones beyond the direct village influence the open country churches still tend to flourish. Of the 64,000 open country and hamlet churches in existence in 1920 more than four-fifths were still functioning in 1930, and outside the immediate influence of villages and towns the number now appears to be holding its own. The closing of strictly open country churches has apparently 'struck bottom' and few more, if any, in the thickly settled and better farming communities are expected to die. In the sparsely settled isolated or arid regions and in the immediate vicinity of towns many churches have closed or are in great jeopardy."

To sum up the situation one may say that the closing of open country churches is not a matter for great alarm but the weakness of some of them, the wasteful competition of others and the neglect of neighboring unchurched farmers by village parishes should concern Christians everywhere. There is an urgent need for a constructive program on behalf of crossroad churches in order that none shall die which should live and an earnest effort to make those which flourish more effective.

1. Since many abandoned country churches are near the towns it is most important that village congregations should reach out into adjacent farm areas to serve farmers where the country parish has been closed or never existed. The tendency of many town congregations is to end their efforts at the "city limits." What a difference there would be if every village pastor were to make a survey to discover the unreached country people around his church. It should add greatly to the zeal and religious spirit of town churches if their official boards would seriously undertake to bring their farm neighbors into their fel-

wship and if, when they enlist them, they ould give country men and women equal epresentation in the leadership of the arish.

2. In the sparsely settled nountainous nd arid regions and other disadvantaged eas of the Nation, where the country urch is handicapped by lack of sufficient eople or support, assistance from outside ources must be given. Many churches in ese sections have died and were it not or church extension work and sacrificial issionaries many more would have been osed. Much of this work is a personal inistry to individuals and families. This pe of work calls for interdenominational ooperation. It also demands a concept of he church as being a fellowship in which he whole church takes responsibility for ts weakest members.

3. Finally, many of the thousands of tronger open country churches which will ontinue to flourish indefinitely need help n their work. Too many are inadequately equipped and their programs often leave nuch to be desired. There should be a greater measure of fellowship and mutuality among them. As a group, their pastors are too poorly paid. This means that well-trained men frequently find it necessary to leave the farmers' church for the town or city at first opportunity. Perhaps no other step is so much needed as that of increasing the income of these leaders. Missionary aid in some cases, interdenominational cooperation and comity in others, assistance in forming yoked fields and larger parishes where needed, and more field work to give guidance in strengthening the program and financial support of its own work are urgent necessities of the open country church.

The situation calls for a sympathetic appreciation of the problems and the unique contribution of the crossroads church and an earnest endeavor to assist it. The Christian objective demands that parishes should be maintained only in those communities where other churches are not now serving the people in order that there shall not be harmful competition and it also requires that some kind of religious ministry shall be available to every family. This holds for all communities but especially for the open country.

## III. URBAN INFLUENCES UPON RURAL CULTURE

### *Sources of Conflict*

There is an "unconscious class consciousness" between city and country because "occupations make people different." "Farmers are farmers and town people are not." City workers are at their tasks relatively short hours and sit at home in the evening to read or go out to a movie while farmers bring in the last load of hay ahead of the rain. Farmers work out of doors with their families or alone, while urban labor segregates the various members of the family and congregates many craftsmen under a single roof.

Differences of dress, speech and manners have sometimes led to antagonisms between them. City people have been accused of having a sense of superiority over farmers, calling them "rubes," "hayseeds," "rustics" and "hillbillies." Likewise, country residents have occasionally returned the compliment with such terms as "dudes" and "city slickers." The extension division of a Land Grant College in an important midwestern state has reported difficulty in serving its uneducated, poorer farmers who fear that the "city brains are trying to work us again."

It is well known that the most significant basis of the rural-urban conflict is economic. Much of it has been due to an unconscious exploitation of rural life by the city. By the nature of things, urban development has often been at the expense of the country. Wealth naturally flows from the latter to the former as population, leadership and commerce move cityward. The disproportionate concentration of the nation's wealth in the cities is not necessarily the fault of individuals so much as it is due to the nature of our rural-urban economy. Business is conducted in the

cities. Even farmers spend their money there, directly or indirectly. Business and industry very largely control both the prices farmers get for their products and what they pay for the goods they must buy.

*Rural Grievances*

Such facts have led to many grievances between city and country. "Embattled farmers" has become a watchword at times when agriculturalists organized themselves into various movements to try to obtain a larger share in the national income. The rise of such organizations as the Grange, Farmers' Alliance, Farmers' Union, Non-Partisan League and American Farm Bureau Federation was in response to the desire for agrarian redress, largely directed against the urban economy.

A popular cartoon which went the rounds at the turn of the century during the agrarian revolt associated with the Populist movement was one that expressed the view of many midwestern farmers. It depicted a cow superimposed upon a map of the United States. A farmer in Kansas was feeding her and a banker in Wall Street was milking her while New England investors carried the milk off toward Boston.

Rural culture and the country church have lagged. Cities have more than their share of the public services for culture, health, welfare, education and home conveniences. Even in the church differentials unfavorable to the rural life in buildings, income and leadership are apparent. The lower average salary of rural pastors has led to tension. Town and country preachers have been asking those in city pulpits who share with them an interest in economic justice in industry and agriculture for help in attacking a similar problem right within the church.

*Handicaps Due to Urbanism*

Urbanism may be a handicap to the educational work of the rural church and rural influences may be harmful to the city institutions. These phenomena are due to the fact that the culture of one does not always fit needs of the other. The complex social patterns of the city may be disturbing to the rural social order, and crossroads patterns are usually inadequate for the solutions of urban problems. Just as the city church is often handicapped by small-town minds who have migrated to it, so the rural church feels the effects of the outreach of urban thought-patterns.

The city has set the style for this civilization. The gadgets of the city are forced upon rural people. One way of "keeping up with the Joneses" in rural communities is to own and use the products of the city. Everyone interested in rural welfare welcomes the advent into rural districts of the automobile, radio, telephone, bathtubs, running water and electricity. But damage is done if the material values produced by urban civilization lead country people to have ambitions and appetites beyond what a rural community can provide.

As urbanism increases in its influence in a rural region, church and religion suffer. Rural people tend to take to the road in their cars on Sunday much as do city folk. The automobile does not of itself, keep people from church but the psychology which accompanies the rise of such conveniences as the car does. The automobile provides a way to use the time of people who no longer care to attend church. Similarly, the radio, *per se,* does not turn people from church and religion. They do not stay at home to hear sermons on the air in preference to the services of the neighborhood church. The mind-set of an urbanized world, facilitated by mechanical devices, is what makes the difference.

These trends suggest that the rural church may need to change its strategy. The urbanized rural mind, or "rurban" psychology demands something more than a backward religious program. Rural people are better off to have the conveniences of modern civilization and the enlightened culture which the city produces. In any event, the urbanization process cannot be turned back in most rural areas. The rural church must make an adjustment to

while maintaining, as best it can, the spiritual values in rural life.

*Recognition of Mutuality*

Such a picture is not a pretty one. It might well have caused some to feel, as they do, that the situation is nearly hopeless.

However, it need not be so considered. There is a growing mutuality between rural and urban life. While there is still a serious lack of equality between city and country, it is becoming increasingly clear that it is not so much a question of who shall have the larger share of the goods of life as it is an issue whether a decent standard of living shall be possible for any.

Rural specialists have been preaching a doctrine which takes for granted the mutuality of agriculture and industry. The welfare of either depends upon the prosperity of the other. That there is a definite relationship between city and country economically is shown by the fact that in any given year agricultural production and industrial production exhibit a close correlation.

For instance, factory payrolls and the total cash value of cheese in the country rise and fall together from period to period.

Rural-urban mutuality is on the increase. The report of the Committee on Social Trends in 1933 revealed that "open country areas are losing much of their former isolation and are acquiring a far greater interdependence with other sections of society while still maintaining an identity of their own."

The development of the village as a half-way station between farm and city the coming of mechanical transportation and communication and a concomitant decline of local neighborhoods and the increased urbanization of rural culture are largely responsible for this trend toward greater rural-urban mutuality.

In fact, the process of urbanization has gone so far in a few areas that some sociologists have invented the term "rurban" to describe their condition.

In the church, too, there has developed an increasing awareness of the rural parish. Missionary aid, given in large measure by the larger city congregations and received mostly by disadvantaged rural churches has been a practice for many years.

*Significance of the Rural Church*

A study of population trends in this country reveals something of the city's stake in rural problems. Stated in round numbers, the population of the United States was 122,770,000 in 1930. Of this number about 53,820,000 individuals lived on the farms and in the rural towns while over 68,950,000 resided in the cities. In other words, America was 43.8 per cent rural. Approximately 25 per cent of the total population lived on the farm while 19 per cent was found in rural villages of less than 2,500 souls.

Children are born in the country and in the towns in more than sufficient numbers to keep the population growing at a healthy pace while city birth rates tend to decline. In every state, excepting Connecticut, where numerous urban commuters reside, farm families more than reproduce themselves. Farm women in six great rural states gave birth to nearly twice as many children as these states need to maintain their country population. In all other areas, with varying but high numbers, there is a "surplus" of farm youth. Birth rates in rural towns, though slightly lower, are comparable to those of farm families.

Salt Lake City stands alone as the one American metropolis of over 100,000 which reproduces itself. In only seven states are there cities with a population of 2,500 to 100,000 which have enough births to prevent a decline. Religious groups which emphasize procreation, and the more recently arrived immigrants accounted for surplus births in the cities of most of these seven urban states at the last census. But already there are signs that they, too, are being affected by the tension of urban life. The city dweller of modest income is forced to limit the size

of his family, in spite of his religious ideals.

Agriculture cannot absorb its surplus youth. Machine farming and reduced acreage have produced a state of unemployment for large numbers of rural people. Though 25 per cent of the population of the United States lives on the farms, it is estimated that 15 per cent could produce all the food and fiber required for present needs. On the other hand, urban industry requires more laborers in normal times than it can produce from its own stock.

Farms and villages, therefore, have more people than they need, while the birth rate in the cities declines. Cityward migration is inevitable because of the lack of opportunities in the present rural economy. Because the surplus of rural youth will eventually migrate to urban centers, the quality of rural people is a matter of great concern to American cities. If many of them come from the disadvantaged class the city will pay the price of a citizenry suffering from rickets, intellectual poverty and spiritual illiteracy.

There is thus an inevitable mutual interest between rural and urban parishes. Town and country churches are interested in what the city will do to their youth who leave the farms and villages, while the city must care about the quality of people it will receive from rural communities.

*Rural Contributions*

The growing mutuality between rural and urban churches is to be seen in what they contribute to each other. Just as agriculture is the source of the city's food and fiber and a large outlet for its manufactured goods, the rural parish is a reservoir of life for the urban church. People who come to the city are usually from the rural parishes and multitudes of them find their way into urban churches.

Many of the members and leaders of almost any city church received their first religious inspiration and education from some little parish in a small town or in the open country. True, they often forget their heritage but, nevertheless, the debt of the city church to rural life still stands.

Young people come to the city bringing assets of education and character which they have received at the expense of country communities. Rural districts invest millions of dollars annually in the physical, mental and spiritual development of childhood and youth which will later enrich urban life.

Recognition of this fact is to be seen in the movement in recent years to put back some of the wealth drawn from rural regions through AAA payments, rural relief, state aid to rural schools and subsidy to town and country churches.

Rural religion also contributes some of the freshness of country life to the whole church. If reactionary theology from isolated areas sometimes discounts a part of this value, the stricter moral standards and the sincere faith which usually characterizes rural Christianity are much-needed contributions to urban religion.

*Urban Contributions*

But, just as dependence is not all in one direction, so the contribution of the city meets that of the country church somewhere near halfway. City people have helped build good roads up to the door of the rural church. It is granted that this improvement was often in the interest of city trade but the country church benefits by it.

Spiritual highways are being built, also. Through study courses and a significant mass of literature the city church is seeking to understand rural life. Greater fellowship between urban and rural pastors is developing.

For instance, in the recent series of rural church institutes in certain corn-belt states, city pastors attended to about as high a percentage as rural pastors.

City churches contribute the results of advanced thinking in theology and relatively well-thought-out ideals and programs for making religion pertinent to social issues.

Not that the movement of religious ideas

l ideals is all in one direction but the nparatively richer resources for thought l action in urban regions is being shared reasingly beyond the city limits.

Specifically, both rural and urban Chris- ns should work together to (1) equalize nomic opportunity, (2) distribute the ds of the "abundant life" and (3) in- ase mutual fellowship between all sec- ns of society, whether rural, urban "rurban."

*ral-Urban Strategy*

The increased interest in the rural rch does not mean that the city church uld be neglected. Quite the opposite, e urban church is extremely important a complete ecology of religion. But if er the city churches are to be served well, ere must be a strategy for strengthen- g the rural churches which have the portunity to start so many people out in e religious life. The homes on the farms nd in the small rural towns eventually rnish many new people to the cities. A rong rural church will tend to send those dividuals to the city with a sound faith hich will help lead them into an active lationship to the city church. Thus ne rural parish is a recruiting ground or the city church.

A wise strategy for the church, at- rge, is not simply a *rural* program, nor erely a *city* program, but a complete *rategy* which includes both. It will in- lude a rural program to get the people here they live and while they are young. hen, too, it will include a program for a trong city church which will receive and urture those who migrate to urban areas.

*Religious Issues in the Agrarian Culture*

Certain writers foretell the decline and all of western civilization. They feel that he rise of the large cities, the complexity f the economic order and the concentra- ion of political power will finally become oo great for the mind of man. These ame prophets often see rural culture as he solution. Rural people, they say, will ehabilitate the dying civilization.

One writer describes a situation in which the people of the great cities will languish in their skyscrapers and apartment buildings, not knowing what to do. The "long-whiskered rural boys from the hills" will come down, look the situation over and say, "What the hell!" Then, these rural people will proceed to rebuild civilization.

Such an explanation is a dramatic one but it is probably not true to the facts because, by the time civilization would collapse by the force of its own weight, rural life would be so urbanized and complicated that it, too, would lack the power to regenerate anything.

However, this view does suggest that there is a need for an effort to preserve the values of rural life in western civilization. To this end, rural church leaders will do their part to maintain the spiritual forces in town and country communities in the face of the growing outreach of urbanism.

*Rural Religion and Evangelism*

Farmers and village people in the rural churches do not think of themselves as *rural* Christians; they think of themselves as *Christians*. They seek the grace of God and need it in terms of human frailty without regard to the type of community in which they live. Rural and urban Christians have more in common than the outward differences seem to indicate. Farmers, villagers and city people have the same Christian message and a similar human nature.

The classifications of "rural" and "urban" are tools for churchmanship, an attempt to apply sociological knowledge to church work. While rural life has much in common with city culture, there are some fundamental differences which are characteristic of each. The vocation of farming and the relation of the farmer to the soil, as well as the intimate relationships of small country and village living, are factors affecting rural people and religion. Parish methods and the preaching message need adaptations to rural people because of their surroundings.

Rural evangelism, like urban evangelism, is the process of introducing persons into the Christian life and enlisting them for the church by preaching, pastoral work, religious education and fellowship. The text is the same in either case but the context differs. An understanding of town and country people and society is needed in order to take full advantage of the opportunity of the rural church.

# Memories and Movements of Fifty Years

THE editor is taking the privilege of his editorial authority to offer as the editorial for this issue of THE MINISTER'S QUARTERLY the substance of an address which he gave to the ministers of Boston and the vicinage on the occasion of a reception which they were gracious enough to give him on his 80th birthday. He believes that the substance of the editorial may have significance for those whose 80th birthdays are still happily in a dim and distant future and may review for those who are more nearly the editor's contemporaries some aspects of their own pilgrimage through the years.

* * *

I can, this morning, do no other than review some aspects of the past which concern us all as ministers of the Christian gospel. For the religious movements and issues of the last half-century are our shared inheritances. The elements of autobiography are to a certain extent necessary, but only to provide the framework for the picture. I was ordained in the Second Congregational Church in Greenfield, Massachusetts, on a bitter winter night in January 1895. That date supplies a point of departure; it seems now for so many reasons a golden age, though that is an elusive phrase. Like a path of light across reflecting waters it depends so much upon where one stands. It is the fashion now to call it a self-deluded time, whose old men dreamed impossible dreams and whose young men mistook a mirage for a vision.

* * *

But it was a good time then. There were alarums and excursions, of course. There was Theodore Roosevelt charging, glory-bound, up San Juan Hill and Dewey sinking a little Spanish fleet outside Manila Harbor. There was, in consequence thereof, a heated debate about our future policies. The word "imperialism" was already in circulation and "anti-imperialism." We were not, however, for the most part, thinking in those spacious terms. We were debating as to whether we should take up the white man's burden in the Philippine Islands, about whose exact geographical position and ethnic habit most of us were rather vague. The "Little Red Schoolhouse," it was generally felt, could be exported to the Coral Seas, to the manifest advantage of everyone concerned. Lyman Abbott and the *Outlook* were quite evangelical about the whole matter. God, they thought, had willed it.

* * *

But all this was half around the world from the Connecticut Valley and the Franklin County hills and it was beyond possible imagination that anything should ever happen there which would disturb their peace. Inherited religious, social and industrial patterns were little changed. Protestant pulpits of all denominations in the larger cities were occupied generally by preachers of outstanding distinction. They moved in spacious regions and preached with eloquence. Some of them wrote books, never too many, with a classic clarity of style. Industries were, for the most part, family inheritances, passed

om father to son. The relations between se operators and their employees was, the most part, long and intimate. One the better-paid mechanics in our parish d me that he was getting $16 a week, l he seemed to live on it very comfort- y with something left over for his rch.

There were, however, embattled sectors the theological front, and one may note the impact of evolution upon inherited th. The acceptance of evolution and implications of it had been slow in ching the American religious and even entific fields. The engagements had un earlier in England, though one may e the first engagement on our shores early as the middle 80's of the last cen- y. Higher education in the Middle est was carried on by church, schools d colleges, and they held the line for e first chapters of Genesis militantly. any of us in the more secular Ohio ate University came strongly under the fluence of Washington Gladden, whose en and courageous mind put us then, d since, very deeply in his debt. In rly spring, sixty years ago, he repeated our plain old chapel a series of lectures nich he had earlier given in England. He called them "Burning Questions." ould one believe in God, in immortality, the Christian gospel? He faced all ese great things as though the disturbing ht of contemporaneous science were aying upon the pages from which he ad. He quoted names of great authori- s then, and now perhaps forgotten.— homas Huxley, Matthew Arnold, Her- rt Spencer. He refused to be halted their doubts, their agnosticisms, and ith grave and noble music, repeated the st strophes of the Te Deum as a still ssible and regnant faith. It was easy en to fit the immanence of God into e framework of the Eonian processes rough which and in which God worked. he horizons of space and time were im- easurably extended. All categories of ought began to be accommodated to the ling idea of development.

Henry Drummond traced "the ascent of man" from some primordial cell in some vanished sea to the soul. The struggle for the lives of others was, he said, more dominantly creative than the struggle for individual existence. Nature was not red in tooth and claw. It was bright with adumbrations of love and sacrifice. Even a wayside flower neither lived or died for itself and its petals were touched with some anticipatory glory of sacrifice. John Fiske told us that the prolonged infancy of the human child had evoked parental affection and washed a stone-age cradle with prophetic light. Benjamin Kidd argued that power and privilege are essentially benevolent and cited English social legislation in proof of it.

There seemed no limit then to the progress of human nature and its enterprises. Surely, we believed, the great world's altar stairs did slope through darkness up to God and we quoted "One God, one law, one element and one far-off divine event, toward which the whole creation moves." The event itself seemed not too remote in time or space. It is not easy to convey to anyone now the emancipating and inspiring power of all this. "Bliss was it then to be alive, and to be young was very heaven."

Jesus' teaching, especially great passages in the Sermon on the Mount about the Kingdom of God, could more than easily be accommodated to these ruling ideas. They authorized and anticipated them. The 12th chapter of First Corinthians made the gospel of love lyric. The one far-off divine event was the Kingdom of God, without and amongst us realizable in economic, social and political orders. Actually to be realized, Washington Gladden hoped, in Ohio's Scioto Valley. At least it could be if actually sought for.

* * *

For those and by those who so believed, inherited theologies began to be recast, though that recasting does not now seem, in retrospect, to have been excessively

critical or iconoclastic. Theological terms invested with so many associations, were still accepted and repeated. "All the light of sacred story" still shone upon the Cross, but the Cross itself became the supreme revelation of the redemptive power of sacrificial love and not a transaction within the God-head. God had made himself known through a series of self-revelations, ascending from stage to stage and culminating in Jesus Christ, The scope of Incarnation was widened enough to include us all. God was our Father and we were His children. Atonement, Lyman Abbott wrote and preached, was reconciliation, and he, too, believed all revelation was progressive. A new religious literature was thus evoked. Hymnology began to be affected and hymn-books to be revised. Some of our best-known and best-loved hymns were written during that period and there was a renaissance of religious poetry.

* * *

There was also a considerable and heated debate about who wrote the Pentateuch and the second Isaiah. Mr. Moody, who asked George Adams Smith to Northfield, and thereby pained his conservative friends, suggested that there was no use getting excited about two Isaiahs, since most people didn't know there had been one. Higher criticism, an inept term, had its own sources and channels. It arose in Germany and reached America in ponderous and badly written books, bringing with it an aura of Teutonic authority. The would-be learned amongst us began to quote them to the confusion of our congregations and ourselves. The infallible authority of the Bible did begin to give way at the margins in regions as yet apparently unimportant.

But these examinations and interpretations were also creative and they made for freedom. In one unforgettable winter I read George Adams Smith's volumes on Isaiah and so began to see the settings of religion and revelation in their proper historical occasions, an insight of almost unspeakable value. Occasionally I laid the book down and watched a neighbor testing a four-wheeled contraption, driven by an internal combustion engine, to see if he could get it up the little hill outside the study window. Had he made it, he might have been carried to fame and fortune, but he did not. He had not solved the problem of transmission. No one of us then foresaw what that internal combustion engine in full action, on earth and in the sky, would do to the world. Meanwhile my parishioners who loved good horses drove across the vernal and autumnal hills and there was the music of sleigh-bells over the winter snows.

* * *

That is a detour. The significant thing is that higher criticism, with all its implications, and evolution, with all its implications, combined to create a corpus of ruling ideas under whose spell many of us then lived and moved and, as young ministers, had our being. I do not mean to say that all our approaches were the same, but that there was a "mind of the time" which could thus be characterized. Nor did all this go unchallenged. On the contrary. There was one heresy trial, which made newspaper headlines, and had far-reaching reprecussions, but Congregationalism, through the very elasticity of its organization, took the shock as piling meets a ferryboat coming into the slip. It yielded, but did not give way.

One may, if he pleases, believe this mediation of Congregational leaders in a time of transition to have been one of its historical services to religion. For all that, the great body of American Christian thought was not during this period much reached or essentially changed. The Fundamentalist controversies a quarter of a century later proved that. Nor, according to the records, were the now embattled terms "liberal" and "liberalism" theologically in general circulation. In England there was some use of the term "the new theology." Washington Gladden

er wrote a book he called "Present-
y Theology." "Modernism" had cer-
nly not then become either a boast or
indictment.

t was all, essentially, on one front of
ristian thought a free, reverent, in-
ring temper, seeking so to carry in-
ited faith through a transition period
to vitalize and preserve it, its banners
high advanced. There were many of
for whom the Christian ministry was
s made possible, and, acknowledged
unacknowledged, what our leaders then
rendered a service to Christian thought
faith which cannot easily be over-
inated. The now considerable group
ose condemnations of this free, inquir-
, and perhaps too idealistic movement
part of their stock in trade, are them-
ves more deeply in debt to it than they
ve the grace or, perhaps, the under-
nding to confess. The freeborn ought
t to scorn those who purchased their
erty at a great price.

The few of us now left who knew these
aders personally, find it hard to be pa-
nt with those who so misrepresent them.
isdom did not die with them, but it
rtainly did not dawn upon a hitherto
nighted world with their critics. At any
te, being then young in a world now so
ng and so far away, I would not have
changed the graystone Second Con-
eational Church in Greenfield for West-
inster Abbey nor the pillared front of
e First Church in Burlington, Vermont,
r St. Paul's. And it did then seem pos-
ble to build the New Jerusalem in this,
ir free and happy land.

* * *

Then there was the "social Gospel."
ladden, Rauschenbusch, Josiah Strong;
d other were telling whomsoever would
ten that Christianity not only should
ve something to say about social, eco-
mic, and industrial conditions, but that
had, rightly interpreted and applied, a
ry great deal to say. Gladden called it
plied Christianity, field and factory,
reet-car and railroad Christianity. In
this field he wrote and has read extensively. Rauschenbusch supplied the theology for applied Christianity, and believed that Protestantism, at least, took the wrong turning in the Reformation, with almost tragic consequences.

These men were anything but "naïve Utopians." They foresaw sadly the possible costly and more than costly issues of the social and economic forces then in action, unless they were given new qualities and fundamentally redirected. A careful examination of all they said and wrote would prove them to have been about the only group then articulate who did possess such prophetic vision. The alternatives, they believed, to social and economic dissolution were a really consistent Christian way of motivation, action, and relationship, not only in the conduct of individual lives, but in all social, economic, and political fields. And they had at least the prophets, the Sermon on the Mount, and urgencies already beginning to be portentous on their side.

The conception of the Kingdom of God already noted, as an order realizable in human history naturally implemented the "social Gospel." It all tied up together It is easy now to see how in the first glow of the movement even the wisest of its advocates did not too clearly see the fundamental and perhaps revolutionary readjustments which it involved, or how the social and economic implementations of it could be accomplished. They did plead for Christian attitudes, tempers and relationships in vital regions which before them had been neglected. They broke down the theological isolations of salvation.

They may have trusted too much to the sheer power of good will without a program or without instruments. Rauschenbusch's PRAYERS OF THE SOCIAL AWAKENING testify to that. They glow with dreams and visions. They touch every human estate with the glory of what it might become. They leaven the soul and present our troubled estate to God with pity and tenderness. And they leave so much still to be answered. Perhaps in

the long run that may prove to have been the better way. A vision articulate in a prayer may do what platforms and propaganda can never do. But the challenge was there, and a sense of Christian frontiers as yet ungained, and the vast possibilities of the Gospel. And these cast their spell upon us.

* * *

There was, in the early 1900s, a great concern for international peace, and the persuasion that it could really be secured, (again) if only properly implemented. The case against war was very nobly argued. The causes of war were analyzed and catalogued, though one could not then foresee what new causes would arise while the other causes faded out of the picture. A really impressive literature now, one suspects, in the neglected alcoves of libraries found publishers and readers. Movements and meetings for peace became general and even popular. "Pacifist" and "pacifism," if they were used at all, had not the connotations they now have. Seeking peace and pursuing it was not yet considered an un-American activity. A Russian czar asked for disarmament. Arbitration treaties, from which much was expected, were drawn and generally refused ratification by the United States Senate. It was felt that the churches held a highly strategic position in the quest for peace. The Church Peace Union was organized and supported by the Carnegie Foundation. Church councils, Conferences, and General Assemblies, resolutions, and preaching were thereby much influenced later.

* * *

These three phases of Christian thinking, questing and preaching, thus stressed, furnished one group in our generation, causes, crusades, and sermonic substance. I do not mean to say that the generality of preaching from Sunday to Sunday was thus entirely focussed. There were always the amplitudes of the Gospel, treasuries of texts, the scope and mystery of life, and we dealt with them as we could. New voices began to be heard, and interests changed. Dominant American Communions were, at about the same time, much occupied with their own corporate affairs and mechanisms. There were movements toward Church unity. Foreign Missions, urged by extremely competent leaders, evoked generous responses from the churches and enlistments for missions from young men and women. Missionary leaders believed the world could be won for Christ in one generation. Indeed, they made that their slogan. And we sang "We have a story to tell to nations . . ." and "For the darkness shall turn to dawning, and the dawning to noon day bright, and Christ's great Kingdom shall come on earth, the Kingdom of love and light."

The years passed by were charged to our account. The strange thing now, in retrospect, is how soon it grew later than we thought. Russia and Japan fought an inconclusive war. The San Francisco earthquake and fire took the headlines. We were simple-minded enough then to believe that the partial ruin of a single great city was a catastrophe of world importance and we preached about it, inquiring, as Job did, why God had so dealt with his children. But ours was still a pleasant world. The stream of time which bore us on had minor rapids, rocks and shoals. We did not dream how near the abysses were, The time currents were kind to me; pastorates in historic churches, and after a second pastorate in Detroit, a chair of Homiletics in Auburn Theological Seminary. During those twelve Auburn years, I wrote probably too many books, most of which are now out of print, and had a rather far-flung association with men and movements, particularly with the then Southern Methodist Church, which are now treasured pages in my book of remembrance. Eight years of semi-retirement followed in a lovely old Marshfield house, with garden and flowers, friendly neighbors, and interim preaching, and

en the long-sustaining order of my
e gave way. . . .

There were then (to repeat) three issues
hich began fifty years ago to furnish a
ung preacher ruling ideas, challenging
ises and a wealth of subject matter;
ological transition, socially applied
ristianity, and international peace. We
not, all of us, preach along the same
nt, but even for the more conservative
se three issues were there to be ac-
ted or to be opposed. They were un-
apable.

Preaching does need a theology, Words
wisdom about God and His ways.
Christian Way does need a sup-
ting social order, or else the Sermon
the Mount is only haunting music and
Cross has failed to achieve a com-
ted salvation. And unless Christianity
n save they now imperil civilization from
self-destruction of war; it has failed
o in its redemptive task.

* * *

And now? They say that one under-
nds only his own generation, and, there-
re, needs to take great care in judging
e generation which follows him. Late
ternoon, remembering its vanished
orning, should not draw the veil of its
manent twilight across the mornings
at now are dawning. With these quali-
ations, I can only say that the long
lf-century thus under review seems
her to have failed or to have been estop-
d in these three regions. To use a cur-
nt phrase, theology has ceased to be
stematic and become splintered. Digests
current theological movements, easily
cessible, no longer divide us into Lib-
als or Conservatives. They consider
oups instead.—"The neo-Orthodox,"
he neo-Thomist," or what have you. The
cabularies of the books we are asked
read have become increasingly meta-
ysical and philosophical. The despairs
European continental theology have af-
cted the more confident and idealistic
nper of American theology. All theo-
logical thinking is certainly darkened by the sense of crisis.

Our social and economic orders are seamed with antagonisms. Though the Social Gospel has not been in vain. If one should check the Social Creed set forth by the Federal Council before the First World War, one would see how largely much of it has been incorporated in Social-legislation. But, to a considerable extent, the more socially minded political leaders have supplanted the prophets of applied Christianity. How far the temper which the movements for applied Christianity evoked has furnished them political support is a very difficult question to answer. We have certainly lost, for the present, our earlier confidences in the near possibilities of international peace. Here in America militarism has an ascendency it certainly did not have fifty years ago. Since Toynbee has told us that militarism has, more than anything else, already destroyed seventeen civilizations, we certainly must recognize the portentous shadow it casts across our own.

* * *

This, at least, is sure; we gain nothing, we Christian preachers, young or old, by agreeing with voices now dominant, that we are under bonds to causes which can never be won, though we cannot escape their compulsions. This is not the right gospel for an age of doubt or even despair; it is not the Christian gospel. There always have been, and always will be, unsubdued regions to occupy—new frontiers for love and goodness. It is the glory of life to hear trumpet calls from heights as yet ungained. This, I believe, to have been the enduring message of the leaders from whom some of us heard it, now so long ago. It is the enduring message of Jesus Christ from the Galilean Hills; the enduring message of the Cross. It is the mandate of the Christian pulpit to see that these calling trumpets are still heard, nay to become their very stations. Those of us who were once young heard the trumpets. They were our call to the

ministry, and now, though most of those with whom I began have been welcomed by them on the other shore, I hear them still. . . .

Given the choice, few of us would ask to travel again the roads along which we have so far come, but we salute the comrades who will carry on. There is no vocation like the vocation of the Christian ministry, and a time like this glorifies it with an indefinable significance. When they asked Thomas Carlyle, himself grown old, to give the rectorial address at Edinburgh University, he spoke as his spirit moved him and ended with a single sentence, in which, as in a crucible, all he had known and sought was fused: "I bid you hope." Brethren, I bid you hope.

## DR. ATKINS' EIGHTIETH BIRTHDAY

ON MONDAY, OCTOBER 4, 1948, Dr. Gaius Glenn Atkins was eighty years old. Friends of his in and about Boston took advantage of this fact to pay him a tribute of affectionate regard, at the Old South Church.

At 11:30 the company met in Gordon Chapel and after a brief introductory service in which Rev. J. Caleb Justice, Rev. Alfred V. Bliss, Rev. Arthur J. Snow and Rev. Robert M. Gray participated, Dr. Atkins spoke on "Sixty Years in the Ministry."

The company then went upstairs and sat down to lunch with Dr. Atkins. About 125 men were present. At the conclusion of the luncheon, Rev. J. Burman Long, who had presided in Gordon Chapel as President of the Boston Ministers Meeting, called the gathering to order and introduced four long-time friends of Dr. Atkins who spoke to him and about him concerning these aspects of his life: "As a Congregationalist," Rev. Frederick L. Fagley; "As a Preacher and Advisor of Preachers," Rev. Harry L. Meyer; "As a Contributor to Modern Religious Thought," Rev. Raymond Calkins; "As a Personal Influence," Rev. Charles C. Merrill. Rev. Oscar E. Maurer made a special trip from New Haven in order to add fitting words. To all of which Dr. Atkins replied in his unique way.*

The benediction was pronounced by Bishop Lewis O. Hartman of the Methodist Church.

*The celebration was under the auspices of the four Boston Congregational Ministers Clubs —Winthrop, Monday, Pilgrim and Fortnightly—and of the Boston Congregational Ministers Meeting.

# Term Pastorates

The Rev. Horace Holton, D.D.
*Boston, Massachusetts*

TWO problems connected with pastoral relations trouble our churches, state superintendents acement officers. One problem con- itself with too short pastorates, and her with too long ones. This article es to discuss the latter.

ditionally a pastorate was for life. nals of our old established churches contain accounts of pastorates, fifty, ears or even longer. These pastors, of them, were men of piety, and ng, who became honored and be- shepherds of their flocks and persons luence in their communities. They truly men of distinction in their tion. Honesty, however, compels say that such was not always the as a further search into the records now. For example, there is the ac- of one such minister who became nely unpopular in his parish. In to get rid of him the men of the exerted their political influence to him made State Historian; an office which he was well suited as is ced by his preparation of a history State which has become a classic. lay, however, the conditions and the us attitudes which made such long ates possible have radically changed. he traditional respect for the office anged, whether we like it or not. ncreased tempo of modern church nd the heavy demands it makes upon nistry, is something never dreamed our church fathers. As a conse- e it has become increasingly dif- for a pastor today to keep his church m operating at full speed. In- y a pastorate tends to slow down e years go by. New and younger ers come to neighboring churches, with which a church is in competition.

They take on new life under this fresh leadership, and the church in question becomes conscious that its minister is no longer young. The younger elements in the congregation begin to get restless; the advisability of a change in their pastorate begins to be discussed. The older members, who love their pastor, at first resist this growing tendency. But the facts that the congregations are growing smaller and the raising of funds becoming more difficult, are not to be denied. Eventually the feeling becomes general that for the good of the church a change is necessary. Unfortunately, the pastor himself is often the last person to become aware of the situation. He knows of course that there is restlessness in his parish and that the church is slowing down; but it is easy for him to persuade himself that the opposition is weak, and confined to a few troublemakers. Then the tension grows and friends and opponents of the pastor begin to take sides. Finally, the pastor is convinced that his work in that parish is done and that he should resign. But where is he to go? He is past the age when he would be considered by a church of equal size and prestige as the one he has. He is reluctant to "step down" to a smaller parish. So the situation steadily deteriorates. Too frequently the end of it all is a broken-hearted pastor and a divided church.

* * *

The picture is a familiar one. We all regret the fact that it is so frequently repeated in our fellowship. It is often the subject of discussion in our councils, but, like the New England weather, so far no one seems to have done anything about it

So I am submitting a plan, which if it were generally adopted might go far toward solving the problem of the too long and perhaps also that of the too short pastorate.

In our Congregational way, we have so far been able to get along without rules and regulations imposed upon us from without. We operate on the basis of established procedure which experience has proven effective and custom has established.

My suggestion is that the time has come when we should establish, by common usage, what I will call term pastorate, by which pastors would be called not for indefinite tenure, as is now the custom, but for a definite term of service. For sake of discussion let us say seven years, which I think would be long enough for an effective cycle of service. At the end of such a term, the church, if it wishes may call its pastor for another term of similar length. This might be continued for a series of terms, but always for a set time and not for indefinite tenure. This plan would not mean that either pastor or church is bound to a seven-year term. The pastorate could be terminated at any time in the usual way. But seven years would be considered the customary cycle of service.

The chief advantage of such a plan might be to avoid the complications resulting from our present indeterminate system. In case where the pastorate has not gone too well and signs of restlessness begin to appear, the knowledge that the pastorate could be terminated at the end of the term would inspire patience and promote stability in the parish. Another advantage might be that pastor and people would work out in advance a seven-year plan in which projects and goals could be set up, toward which the whole congregation could be inspired to work together. Our trouble with our present system is that it does not ordinarily encourage such procedures. Then too, plan would tend to keep the pastor on toes, so to speak. The knowledge that work would come up for mutual anal and decision would give him incent which are not present in an indetermi system. Still another advantage m be in lengthening what are now too sl pastorates. This might be especially t of men in their first pastorates. T would know that at the end of their tern they have been successful, they would in line for calls to fields of larger portunity instead of feeling impelled seek the first chance to move that preser itself.

* * *

Some pastors might strenuously ob to having their work come up for rev and judgment at the end of each se years. It might also be objected that s a plan would encourage restlessness dissatisfaction in their parishes, that the end of a term the troublemakers m "gang up" to get the pastor out, w otherwise he could have gone on v his work and in the end have overc the opposition. Granted the validity such objections, it might be fair to if they are not really actuated by s interest rather than concern for the g of the church. Probably there are bo to be casualties in this system, but whe they will be more serious than those now suffer is an open question.

In the past few years I have been s ing this plan with some of my frie both ministers and laymen, who are m bers of church committees. One su intendent disapproved of it, another he followed this plan when he was in active pastorate. Many of the minis with whom I talked liked the sugges and said they would be willing to s tried, others were not so sure. But the laymen were keen for it. I expe is they who will have the last word.

# Help Us to Help You

## UR MAILING FILE

maintain a mailing file of all ministers serving Congregational stian churches. This is used by all denominational agencies when rmation is mailed to our ministers.

t this file may be as accurate as possible we ask your cooperation dvising us of any change of address.

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General Council, Room 915, 287 Fourth Ave., New York 10, N. Y.

ne .....Date .....

or Incorrect Address .....

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or Correct Address .....

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e of Change .....Signed .....

arks - Church .....

(Use this page for notification)